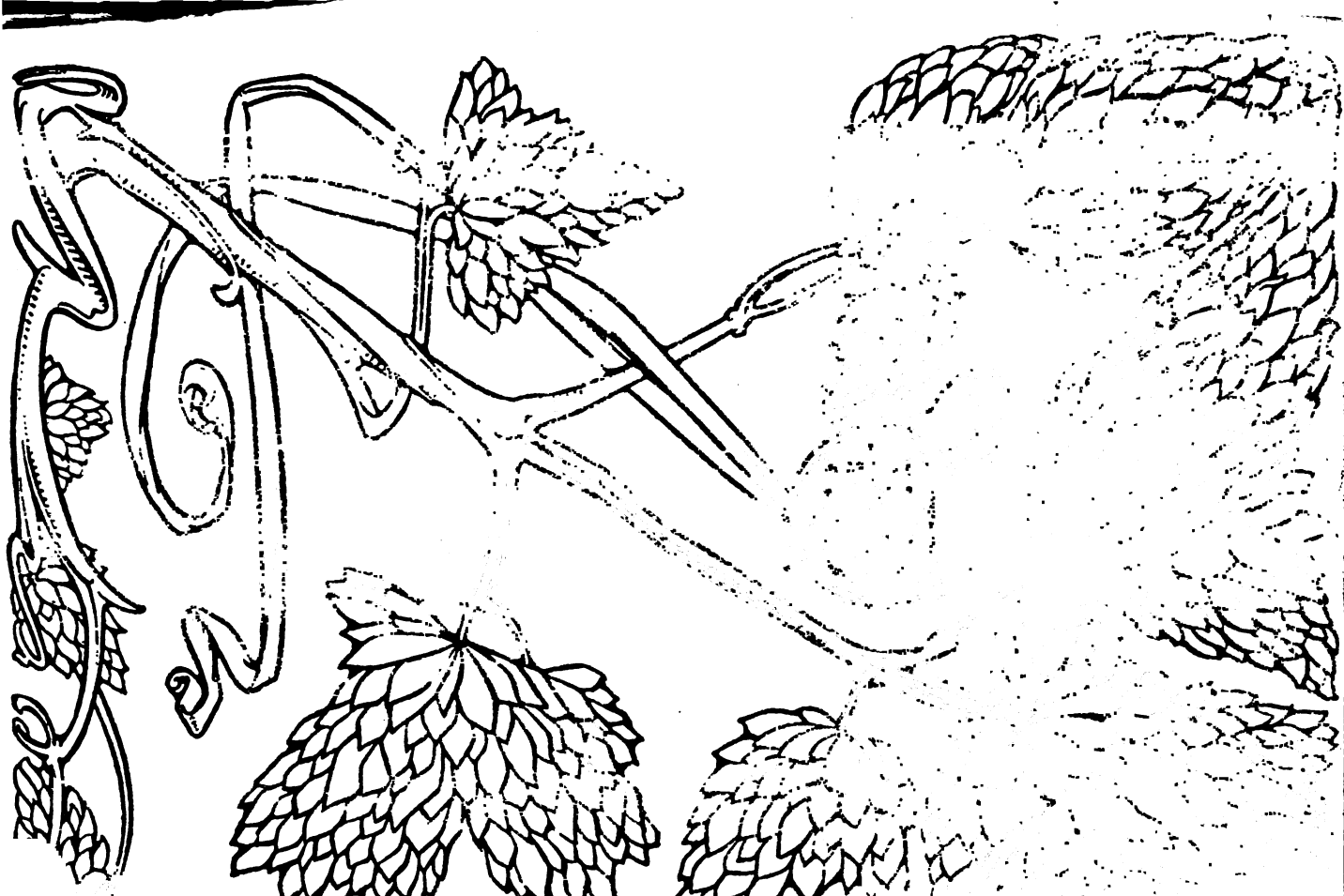
Sir. GALAHAD of NEW·FRANCE

By WILLIAM HENRY JOHNSON



Dear Col. Higginson,

Will you favor me by accepting this volume, in token of my gratitude for many and most valued kindnesses? Faithfully Yours,

William H. Johnson

SIR GALAHAD OF NEW FRANCE

SIR GALAHAD
OF
NEW FRANCE

BY

WILLIAM HENRY JOHNSON

Author of "French Pathfinders in North America," "The World's Discoverers," "Pioneer Spaniards," etc.

Boston
HERBERT B. TURNER & CO.
1905

Published, September, 1905

The Plimpton Press Norwood Mass. U.S.A.

TO

Wayland Smith

a guide, philosopher, and friend to whom this story owes no small debt, it is fitly dedicated, in token of an admiring and loving regard which time cannot wither nor the width of the continent stale

A FOREWORD

To any reader who may be disposed to regard one of the characters in the following story as unduly idealized, the writer begs leave to submit this testimony of one of the earliest explorers of the Lower Mississippi as to the intelligence and amiable disposition of the Indians inhabiting that region: "The Manners and Temper of that Nation is very different from that of the Iroquese, Hurons and Illinois. These are Civil, Easie, Tractable, and capable of Instructions; whereas the others are meer Brutes, as fierce and cruel as any wild Beasts."

Of these interesting barbarians the most advanced, probably, were the Natchez. Their customs, as well as their traditions, seem to connect them with that strange Aztec and Maya culture whose half-deciphered story is the most wonderful chapter of aboriginal history. The earliest European visitors were amazed to find in the American wilderness a people whose hieroglyphic writing, temples, priesthood and ceremonial, sacred perpetual fire, and ruling family, of alleged descent from the Sun, allied them rather, one would say, with Pre-Homeric warriors in the Old World than with such roving and filthy savages as those whom Champlain found on the St. Lawrence.

In a scion of this fine old stock such a development as is here portrayed would not be improbable.

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., June, 1905.

CONTENTS

CONTENTS

PART I

CHAPTER I

THE BARTERER'S LAST REVEL

"Hi, there! Where are you going?"

The speaker, standing with his back to the fire, on the outer fringe of a great semicircle of campfires above which the stars twinkled in the crisp air of late October, hailed a figure that came staggering by on a road leading from the country.

The person addressed turned and hesitatingly approached the fire-light. As he came within its circle, it revealed a youth of perhaps twenty years, with dark, expressive eyes, regular features, and an air of refinement that was heightened by extreme pallor, while it contrasted with his dusty clothing, mud-bespattered boots, and generally forlorn appearance.

His face was haggard, apparently he was under the influence of some strong emotion, and when he stopped

he reeled and raised his hand to his forehead, as if to collect his thoughts.

"Where are you going, I say?" repeated the speaker, not unkindly, seeing what sort of person he was addressing.

"To find — the King of Navarre," the wayfarer stammered out.

"Ha! Ha! That's good!" came in a burst of derisive laughter from a knot of soldiers grouped in various attitudes about the fire.

"Go, sleep off your drink, clodhopper!" cried one surly fellow, looking up in the act of throwing dice.

"Hush!" expostulated the first speaker. "Can't you see, he's no country lout? And he's not drunk either. I believe the boy is sick and out of his head. See how pale he is! What do you want of the King of Navarre?" he said, turning again to the stranger.

"I have — a letter — to him."

Another burst of laughter followed, more uproarious than the first.

"Come! That's too strong," sung out jovially a new voice. "Take yourself off, my lad, and sober up."

"Stop! Not so fast!" cried a sturdy, swart fellow who had not yet spoken, at the same time springing to his feet. Approaching the youth, he said roughly, "Give me that letter!"

On the instant new vigor seemed to inspire the young stranger.

"Not on my life!" he answered, drawing back and with a quick, involuntary motion clutching his doublet over his bosom.

"But you will, my cockerel!" said the other, advancing on him with an angry look.

All had risen to their feet to witness the encounter. They noted that the unarmed, slender youth did not give an inch before the sturdy ruffian.

"Give it to me, I say!" the latter hissed between his teeth, seizing the other's hand covering his bosom.

In a moment the two were struggling together, the lithe figure of the younger man twisting about the bulky form of his assailant, who, swearing furiously, vainly tried to get hold of the precious packet.

"Come! Leave that, François!" said a voice in the ruffian's ear, while a strong pair of arms gripped him from behind and drew him back raging impotently.

It was the man who had first spoken to the stranger. Swinging his brutal comrade away, he planted himself between the two combatants. On one side was the stranger, panting, paler than ever, but defiant in every feature. On the other side his assailant was struggling furiously with the man who had interfered, but was held by others who were trying to pacify him.

"Don't you see, François," expostulated one of them, "that the lad is fairly done up? He's game, and he'd fight to his last breath. But nobody shall lay a hand on him again while I am by."

"See here, my boy," he said, turning to the stranger, and handing him a leather cup filled with rough wine, "take this sup. It will do you good."

The youth eagerly took the offered drink and drained the vessel.

"Now follow me," said his first friend. "I'm going to show you the way."

"Thou'lt need take thy letter to hell, my lad," one of the party shouted laughingly after him, as the two walked away into the darkness.

"What does he mean?" the youth asked.

"That the King of Navarre is dead."

"Ah!" the stranger ejaculated, as if pierced with a sudden pain.

"Oh, never mind him. He's only jesting; but in truth the King of Navarre is wounded."

"Perhaps, then, I can't see him. What do you think?" the other asked anxiously.

"I don't know. We shall see."

The guide scanned the stranger curiously by the light of the fires they were passing. The singular hallucination of this wayworn foot-traveler that he was the bearer of an important letter to the general commanding the royal army was interesting. He would like to see how the adventure would end.

They were threading the maze of the camp between tents and shelters of various kinds, past rows of picketed horses, past storehouses and booths where wine, sausages, and the like commodities were sold.

"Your voice sounds Southern. Where do you come from?" the guide asked.

"A long distance," the youth answered warily.

"Not on foot, surely, in those jack-boots!"

"No, I have had a horse."

"What have you done with him?"

"He was stolen last night."

"And you have walked all day in those heavy boots?"

"Yes."

The man looked kindly at the quiet, resolute face by his side. The stranger, revived by the cup of wine, had recovered from his extreme exhaustion and was plodding on sturdily. But his haggard face told a story of long and painful exertion.

The two had come out into a sort of pleasance where apparently the vices of the camp congregated.

"He's plainly not accustomed to a soldier's life," the man reflected, as he noted the youth's evident horror at the sights and sounds about him.

Here came a priest's droning chant over a dying soldier, "Mise-re-re, D-o-m-i-ne."

"*Lourdault, lourdault, garde que tu feras,*" cut in shrilly a woman's voice, backed by a boisterous masculine chorus, from a nearby shelter of boughs where a party of both sexes reveled.

Just then a tipsy creature flaunting by, arm in arm with a soldier, turned to leer slyly over her shoulder at the sightly youth. A look of mingled loathing and pity passed over his face.

His guide, to divert his attention, and still more to gratify his own curiosity, sought to renew their conversation.

"What is this letter about?"

"That is not my affair," was the dry answer.

The man smiled, but persisted. "From whom is it?"

"I must not tell."

The questioner would try other tactics. "It is from a woman, I'll dare swear," he said.

Not a word from the young man, who plodded on, looking straight ahead.

"I wouldn't be a lovers' go-between," the man continued tauntingly.

"And I wouldn't offer to help a fellow in distress and then catechize him on private affairs," the youth replied, turning suddenly on him with flashing eyes.

"Pardi! You are right, my lad," the man replied, with good-natured confusion. "I was only trying you. I like your sort and I won't tease you any more. Anyhow, here we are. There is the King of Navarre's lodging."

They had come out upon an open space where, somewhat apart, and guarded on all sides, stood a roomy manor-house, with lights gleaming from every window.

A sentinel, after halting the two men, called an officer.

"What's your business?" the latter asked gruffly.

"May I speak with Pierre Laurent?"

"Who is he?"

"An attendant of the King of Navarre."

"I don't know any such man. But if he's here, I'll send him out."

Presently came a finicking voice through the darkness, piping,

"Il vaut bien mieux avoir ami
Qu'être mal mariée."

"Who wants me?" it cried, as its possessor came pirouetting down to the sentry's post.

"Étienne Cazenove," the youth answered.

"Étienne Cazenove! Étienne Cazenove, of Pau?" the voice asked, suddenly assuming a nasal whine.

"The same," replied the young messenger, shortly.

"Then, what in Heaven's name are you doing here?"

"I have a letter for the King of Navarre."

"From whom?"

"I must not tell."

"Help yourself, then. I'll have nothing to do with it." Therewith the speaker turned away, whistling.

"Pierre! Pierre Laurent!" the youth called after him.

"Well?"

"If you must know, then," pleaded the young messenger, "come close, and I will tell you."

Laurent came near, and the other whispered in his ear.

"From her!" the other almost shrieked. "From the pious Jeanne to her saintly Antony!"

Then he laughed and capered, as if he were drunk; sobered a little, then burst into a new fit of merriment.

The friendly guide meanwhile stood by gaping. So, the cat was out of the bag! The letter was real. And, strangest of all, from the Queen of Navarre to her husband! Now, all the world knew that there was an absolute breach between the royal couple; she rallying about her, in her castle at Pau, the forces of Protestantism in the South, while her erstwhile consort, from being a loud-mouthed advocate of the new opinions, had gone over bag and baggage to the enemy, and now, with the proverbial zeal of a pervert, was commanding the Catholic and royalist army beleaguering the Huguenot stronghold of the North.

"So, thou wouldst speak with the King," said Pierre Laurent, when he had somewhat calmed down,

"and give him a letter from his loving spouse! Some packet of choice sermons, I trow. I would not for my head be the man to put it into his hands. And do the refreshing daily preachments continue?" he drawled.

Then, suddenly changing his manner, he said, "It will be rare sport to see thee do it. Come!"

"Farewell, and many thanks for your help," said Étienne Cazenove, extending his hand to the man who had befriended him. Then he followed his new guide.

Master Pierre Laurent, page in waiting to the King of Navarre, and duly conscious of his importance, as they entered the brightly lighted hall, shone resplendent in crimson velvet, with flesh-colored silken hose, earrings, and frizzled hair, the effect of all this finery considerably heightened by his being quite tipsy.

On entering, Étienne Cazenove received an immediate shock. Instead of the silence he expected in a wounded man's lodging, he heard a burst of bacchanalian song, followed by peals of laughter. Much wondering, he noiselessly followed his guide, who went on tiptoe straight toward the quarter from which issued the sounds of revelry, and stopping before a curtain which screened a doorway, stealthily drew it aside a few inches and motioned to the other to look within.

In a spacious saloon, around a table loaded with viands, fruit, and wine, sat a gay company of men and women, such women as he had seen in the streets of the camp, but fresher and finer — polished, instead of

dingy brass. Amid this bacchanalian crew sat the King of Navarre, "The Barterer," bolstered with cushions, in a huge chair, one arm supported in a sling resting on a pillow.

The father of the future hero of Ivry was a tall, stout, well-made man, extremely foppish in manner and dress. Though the flush of fever was in his cheeks and its fire in his eyes, his hair was carefully frizzled and curled, and his ears and fingers flashed with jewels. At his side, at the head of the table, painted and dressed in the height of the fashion, sat a handsome young woman on whom he lavished attentions.

"Ha! What thinkst thou now?" hissed Étienne's guide in his ear.

A sickening feeling overcame the young messenger. For this had he traveled through sunshine and storm all the way from the Pyrenees, scarcely stopping for food and rest, changing horses again and again, dreaming always, whether sleeping or waking, of but one thing, to deliver at the earliest moment his Queen's letter, which he knew concerned the fate of Rouen — Rouen, to whose imminent fall these roysterers were drinking? For this had he, when he was robbed of his horse in a thieves' den of a tavern, pressed on and made the last stage on foot, spurred to frantic exertion by the incessant rumble of the siege-guns and the rumor that the wall was already breached, until, reeling with exhaustion, he tottered into the camp? To find the man on whose will, it might be, hung the fate of thousands, engaged in a drunken orgy! Oh, it was cruel! It was intolerable!

Not knowing or heeding whither he went, he staggered out into the darkness, with Laurent's jeering laugh ringing in his ears. More than ever he fancied himself in the purlieus of hell. Oh, for some shelter, some quiet nook where he might rest! He would have sought his friendly guide, but to retrace the maze of the camp was impossible.

Wandering at random, almost sinking with fatigue, presently he heard a deep voice singing to the accompaniment of a lute, and he caught the words,

"Aimez moi, ma mignonne, aimez moi sans danger."

The frivolous theme offended him, but a certain soothing in the singer's voice brought relief to his overstrained nerves, and he paused to listen.

CHAPTER II

A ROBUST NIGHTINGALE AND HIS SONG

"*Aimez moi, ma mignonne, aimez moi sans danger*"

was the refrain of the man's song.

Not arms and the man, but Eternal Woman he sang. It was the story of a wayside encounter, one rustic wit, masculine, matched against a keener, feminine. At each thrust and parry the hearers burst into uproarious laughter. A coarsely jocund audience it was, of soldiers and camp-followers, with a few women.

Around was the riot of a Sixteenth-Century camp, of the most disorderly. Night brought out into more hideous boldness its frank brutality, even as its flaring fires and torches and cressets seemed to glare with a certain feeble defiance beneath the dark dome of the patient heavens. One vice only was not in evidence, — hypocrisy. All others, withholding from virtue their wonted tribute, flaunted themselves brazenly.

A careless crowd had drifted together around the singer, who sat by the door of a rude shanty, beneath the light of a cresset. This revealed a singular figure. The head was massive, with a broad, low brow, crowned with a shock of dark-brown curls clustering close. Bushy eyebrows overhung wide-open, keen gray

eyes. An aquiline nose, somewhat large, of a distinctly Gallic type, with noticeably thin, sensitive nostrils, surmounted a thick and heavy moustache and a Vandyke beard. A bull-like neck, corded with sinews, rested on shoulders abnormally broad. The chest was vast and deep; and long, sinewy arms terminated in strong, nervous, hairy hands, with taper fingers.

Altogether, the superb head and the torso, herculean in its massive mold, would have produced a rarely impressive effect, had they not been offset by a slight hump between the shoulders, as if Nature, having begun benignly, had, with a sudden diabolical caprice, determined to mar her noble handiwork.

Scarcely less noticeable than the singer's body was his sword, which was of a length and weight that might have befitted a giant's hand. To accommodate it to his stature, he wore it, not fastened to a belt, but hanging by a baldric thrown over the right shoulder. Now, as he sat, the hilt rose above him.

In spite of the splendid dignity of his mien, he seemed to be bent on amusing his rough audience. His voice had thrown a spell over them, sweeping them along, as it were, on a wave of mirth. When he fell into a song with the rollicking refrain,

"Faisons bonne chère, faisons-la, faisons,"

a hundred rude voices roared it with him.

The climax of merriment was reached when he began to improvise, to the same air, letting his keen wit play about familiar incidents and persons. Each hit drew peals of laughter, and the refrain was almost

drowned in uproarious hilarity. When he swept a certain gay general and his belle mignonne into the same current with the nameless riff-raff of the camp, the audience fairly went wild, some roaring,

"Faisons bonne chère, faisons-la, faisons,"

while others whistled, hooted, yelled.

The singer took advantage of the clamor to stop. He put down his lute, and wiped his brow, without a sign of mirth in his face, rather with an air of weariness and indifference.

Étienne looked at him in wonder. He had paused to listen, at the first, because of the welcome distraction which the song afforded and the absolute novelty of such an experience. Beyond a few simple and sombre folk-songs, he never had heard in his native village any music but the psalms sung in the conventicle; and, as to the camp at Pau, had such a frivolous jongleur ventured thither, he would have been promptly driven away, after a ride on the wooden horse. Then he had fallen, like the rest, under the spell of the singer's voice and had tarried listening, even while repelled by the trivial quality of the matter. Now he was lost in admiration of the man's wit, his mastery of his audience, his audacity. Surely, this was no common ballad-monger, this man sitting before his boisterous hearers with an air of lofty aloofness, as if disdaining the turbulent mirth he had aroused.

When the uproar had subsided there were clamorous cries for more song.

"Bravo! Bravo, Long Sword! Give us more!" was shouted on every side.

"The Monster is in great form to-night," one man remarked.

"Hush, you fool!" another expostulated. "Do you want to anger him? If he had heard you he wouldn't open his mouth again."

"More! More! Let us hear more," still was the cry.

"Bah, mes garçons! What do you take me for?" the singer replied. "Old Aeolus, with his cavern full of wind, could not content you."

"Never fear, Long Sword! Nobody will mistake you for a windbag. We know your paunch is full of meat and good red wine," a wag replied, and there was a roar of laughter.

"Well, if you must have it so, what shall it be? Would you like something from the old times?"

"Yes, that's what we want. Something from the old fighting days, when there were men. And throw in some of your giants and dwarfs and magicians and fairies," cried one.

There was silence for a moment. Then the minstrel struck a deep note and began a romance of chivalry. Now he had come, it seemed, to his native element, and his voice rolled out in a mighty volume of sound. The rude audience stood gaping, and Étienne caught his breath, in wonder. He was thrilled, transported. Fatigue, disappointment, heart-sickness were forgotten. What a world opened before him! Now he stood with embattled France on the plain of Tours and heard the hoof-beat of the Saracen horse thundering against the rock of the Frankish lines. The bray of trumpets, the clash of steel, the shouts of the com-

batants, the moans of the dying, — all were in the singer's deep tones.

Now he listened to Roland's bugle-blast, in the Pass of Roncesvalles, where Roland and Oliver fought their last great fight. Then he rode with Charlemagne and his paladins through dim Northern forests, haunted by the gods of Walhalla, and scourged the Saxon pagans.

When the long romance came to an end there was a moment of breathless hush. Then the rude audience burst into a tumult of applause, swelling, dying down, and swelling again and again. To Étienne's finer sense, it was a shock. He would rather have gone quietly away. The uproar recalled him to sorry reality.

"One more! Only one more, Long Sword," a voice cried, when the clamor had died down.

"Yes, one more! Only one more," was shouted on every side.

The ministrel answered wearily, "Will you never be satisfied? Do you think it costs me nothing?"

"Oh, we know that. You have a right to be tired, old boy. But give us one more, something light and merry, and we'll say Good-night," a voice pleaded.

"Sing us the Song of the Sword," cried another.

"No, not that," the minstrel answered shortly. "The smell of blood must be in my nostrils. Then the Queen's song sings itself."

"Whatever you will, then," the speaker answered. "But one let us have for our parting."

The minstrel took up his lute, fingered it musingly a while, and then began. What a change! Now his

voice was low and soft. Home was his theme, and what a contrast with the riot of the camp, this chant of pure and sweet womanhood, of true love, of innocent childhood, of all things gentle and guileless. It was as if, on a sudden resolve, he had thrown off all disguises and was opening to them the secret springs of his own life.

Exhausted as he was by nervous strain, overborne by disappointment and perplexity, the appeal was more than Étienne could bear unmoved. Sweet visions of home, dim memories of a young mother floated before him; and as he might have laid his head on her breast and wept, he rested his sore heart on that tender strain and felt its soothing.

Very differently the other hearers were affected. "Bah! A sermon sung!" growled one.

"Let him keep such stuff for women," his mate chimed in, and the pair walked away.

For such themes, on the eve of a city's sack, they had no stomach. Discontent was fast thinning the audience. The crisis was reached when a young woman, painted and bedizened, in the full light of the cresset beneath which the singer sat, suddenly covered her face with her hands and burst into sobs.

"Curse the canting fellow!" said her companion, and, seizing her by the arm, he dragged her from the spot.

This was the signal for an instant breaking up. With growls and oaths the turbulent audience scattered to scenes more congenial.

Étienne had moved forward, as the hearers dispersed, and seated himself on the ground in full view

of the singer, his face buried in his outspread hands, his elbows on his knees. When the minstrel ended his song, there he sat, alone.

Presently a hand was laid on his shoulder, and a kind, deep voice said, "Come inside with me, my boy. This wretched camp is no place for you."

So saying, the singer led the way into the rude shelter by the door of which he had sat, and within which were rough sleeping-places for a half-dozen men. "My mates are all out of the way," he said, "two serving in the trenches and the others, no doubt, drinking themselves drunk somewhere. It's their way, and they like it. So we shall have this den all to ourselves. Sit you here, my lad," he continued, pointing to a bunk. "You are hungry and thirsty, I'll wager."

Therewith he rummaged in a chest and produced a loaf of black bread, from which he cut a generous hunch, to which he added a piece of cheese as big as his hand. Then he filled a formidable leathern cup with rough red wine and set it beside Étienne. Pouring out another for himself, he took his seat opposite.

The cresset burning by the door threw some light within the shanty and enabled Étienne, while he satisfied his hunger and thirst, to take closer note of the strange figure before him. He observed with surprise, as his host moved about the place, that his lower limbs were disproportionately short. Seated, so grand were the proportions of his trunk, he seemed to be a man of more than ordinary stature. On his feet, his appearance was almost dwarfish, a defect which seemed the crueler by contrast with his majestic head.

All the while he ran on with discursive remarks, evidently intended to put the newcomer at his ease, pausing occasionally to take a leisurely sip of wine.

"Rude fare, this, my lad," he concluded, "and rough quarters. Still this is a palace, compared with some of the others. I am talking to you as if you know nothing about it, for I see plainly that you don't belong here. At another time, if you feel like it, you shall tell me something of yourself; not now, for I see you are dead tired. If you have no better place, stay here with me to-night. There's plenty of room. That bunk you are sitting on belongs to a man in the trenches. He won't come in till after daylight."

Étienne gladly accepted the offer and, with a sense of inexpressible relief, stretched out his weary limbs. Soon he was sleeping heavily.

The minstrel bent over him, looking at him closely.

"Poor boy!" he muttered. "What can have brought him into this devilish place? There's gentle blood in his veins, I'll be sworn. See those fine-cut nostrils and shapely hands! Run away from home, most likely. Yet he doesn't look like that kind of a lad. Some sad story, no doubt. If he chooses to tell it freely, he shall: not otherwise."

CHAPTER III

FRÉDÉGONDE'S FRIENDSHIP

Roused by a tremendous roar, Étienne started to his feet, wondering where he was. Then he recalled the occurrences of the previous evening and knew that it was cannon he heard. Three men who were sleeping heavily, disturbed by the firing, turned over, muttered a little, and sank back into sleep. His host sat upright, stretched his long, sinewy arms, hairy as a bear's limbs, and trolling out

"Mais où est le preux Charlemagne?"

got on his feet and began stirring about the shanty.

Étienne, eager to be gone on his mission, was wondering how he could best excuse himself, when the door was pushed open, and two men strode in, armed and accoutred, fresh from the trenches. They stumbled about the shanty in the half-light, hanging their arms against the wall, growling and swearing vigorously all the while.

"What have we to eat here?" said one.

"Nom de Dieu! How hungry I am," said the other. "This cursed trench-duty is damnable work. But, thank God! we have had our last turn. Before night Rouen will be broken into, and then for booty and —"

He broke off suddenly with a low whistle of amaze-

ment, catching sight for the first time of Étienne who, with wide-eyed horror, was looking to his host.

The sight of the youth's white face, with its singular air of refinement, angered the ruffian.

"Nom de Dieu! What cub have we here?" he demanded surlily, planting himself in front of him.

"A young friend of mine, Baptiste," the host replied quietly. At the same time his mighty blade rattled, as he threw the baldric over his shoulder.

"Bah! You choose your company strangely, Rossignol," muttered the other, half-cowed. Then he added, with a contemptuous glance at the slight figure and pale face, "Mordieu! He looks more like a priggish young priest than a mate for a soldier."

"Perhaps he can take care of himself, when it comes to a pinch. In any case, Frédégonde is his friend and won't let him be bullied," replied the host, deliberately. Again his sword rattled, as if shaking itself in its scabbard, and the ruffian quailed before the cool gray eye.

Who was Frédégonde, and what did the minstrel mean, Étienne wondered, and wondered the more seeing the amazingly subduing effect of the hint on Baptiste, who turned away, with a growl, and began to help himself to food.

After they had washed themselves and eaten, Étienne and his host walked out together. The sun was by this time risen, the camp was everywhere astir, and the besiegers' guns roared steadily. Above the batteries, in the foreground, hung a veil of smoke, drifting slowly away and obscuring the outlines of the beleaguered city beyond; and over all the canopy of heaven arched itself serenely blue.

"Faugh!" exclaimed the minstrel. "It sickens a man's soul to live with such brutes. These dogs are waiting for the sack. Then they will be in their element, butchers' curs in a shamble. God save woman or child that comes in their way!"

At this new suggestion of Rouen's peril, Étienne received a fresh shock. "Oh, the letter!" he exclaimed.

"What letter?" the other asked.

Then out came the story of his mission. His host's attitude invited confidence, and he was glad to unburden himself.

"A bold lad you are to venture into this camp on such an errand," the minstrel remarked, when he had heard the story, "and, some might think, bolder yet in confessing it to me."

"Oh, I knew I might trust you. I have no fear of you."

The other's eyes kindled. "Right you are, my boy! When Roland Rossignol betrays a trust — well, enough of that. From this day we are friends" — therewith he seized Étienne's slim hand in his great, hairy fist and well-nigh crushed it — "and she" — tapping the hilt of his sword — "will stand by you through thick and thin. She is a bit dainty and doesn't lavish her friendship. But when she has once pledged it — well, you will see. By the way, your name, please."

"Étienne Beaupré Cazenove."

"Very good. Now what have you done towards executing your commission?"

Étienne related his experience in trying to deliver his letter.

Rossignol listened, his lip curling with scorn. "That creature! Between tippling and philandering, the wonder is how he ever found time to go to the trenches and get himself wounded."

When Étienne, reddening with anger, told of the young woman at the general's side, Rossignol nodded saying, with a cynical smile, "Yes, Mademoiselle de Rouet, one of Queen Catherine's maids of honor and a distinguished soldier in her Flying Squadron. These young women, like the temple-girls I have seen in India, devote themselves to the service of religion, and find pleasing employment in holding wavering Catholic gentlemen to their faith. This one is credited with reconverting the King of Navarre."

Then, noting the look of horror in his young friend's face, he quickly changed the subject, saying, "But you are anxious to execute your commission. It may be that our gallant general has sobered up by this time, and while the penitent mood is on him, who knows but your letter may find its mark? Let us try it."

Towards Navarre's headquarters, accordingly, they went. They found the guard doubled. Nobody was allowed, on any pretext, within the lines. Fever, inflamed by wine, held the roystering general's life hovering in the balance.

Étienne turned with a look of despair to his companion.

"Oh! don't grieve about it," cried Rossignol cheerily. "It's not half so bad as you think. I gather from what you have told me that this letter from the Queen of Navarre was expected to have some influence on the fate of Rouen, if it should fall,

as it surely will. Let me tell you, it would not count the snap of a finger. Who cares for Antony, the Barterer? What would his word avail — even if he were willing to speak it — to hold in leash such dogs as you have seen? These hounds are hungry for blood and will not be kept back."

"You have never seen the game of war, have you?" he continued. "Let us walk towards the trenches."

They made their way to the front and ensconced themselves where they commanded a full view of the siege-works, as well as of the city walls.

Plainly, Rouen's case was desperate. Since daylight the roar of the royalists' guns had been incessant, and every shot told on the scarred and seamed defences. Each time that a cannon-ball dislodged a stone, a jubilant cheer went up all the length of the lines. The situation was hopeless, and the desultory fire from the ramparts expressed but a sullen defiance.

"Too bad! Too bad!" said Rossignol, shaking his head gloomily. "See yon section ready to fall! And when the breach comes, — ah, God!"

Étienne looked at him in amazement. Suddenly a gate nearly opposite swung wide open, and out rushed a band of the defenders charging straight upon the hostile batteries, at their head a gallant fellow, whose shouts of encouragement to his men were plainly heard above the din.

"Ah, brave boys!" cried Rossignol, leaping on the embankment behind which the two had been crouching, and waving his hand, while the Queen rattled in her scabbard.

Étienne glanced fearfully around. Happily, amid the general excitement this extraordinary demonstration had not been noticed.

On came the gallant band, but, alas! to meet its fate. Before it had crossed half the space between the walls and the trenches, the besiegers' guns were plowing lanes through it. The brave fellows wavered, and Rossignol's face fell. They rallied to their leader and started forward again. Rossignol huzzahed and tossed his cap in the air like a schoolboy. Fortunately, the scene in front absorbed all attention. Fast and furiously in the trenches beat the drums. Forth from them men were leaping in crowds, flocking towards the new scene of action.

Suddenly down went the brave leader, killed by a cannon-ball. Instant dismay seized his followers. They halted, wavered, then began to fall back, while the besiegers swiftly enveloped their flanks.

The moment was critical. Rossignol ground his teeth, while the Queen rattled as if she would leap from the scabbard.

"By Heaven!" he cried. "It's more than I can bear! Follow me, my lad!"

Therewith he leaped out and with astonishing speed made towards the sally-party, drawing his mighty blade as he ran.

Étienne, wondering, followed quickly, snatching a sword from a man who had just fallen. They joined the men rapidly closing in around the sally-party, who were in disorder, the most retreating, a few attempting to make a stand.

Before he knew how it happened, Étienne, following

Rossignol, found himself among those whom a minute before they had seemed to pursue.

At the same moment his companion faced about and sent a mighty shout ringing over the field, "Rouen to the rescue! Rouennais, rally here!"

Then he flung himself in front of the foremost pursuers, swinging his whistling blade and shouting, "Back, hounds!"

On the sally-party the effect of his action was magical. Quickly recovering from their confusion, they ranged themselves about him, with renewed hope.

"Steady, men, steady! Form a circle!" he commanded. "So! Don't crowd. Keep your distance."

The brave fellows recognized a master spirit and fell into a circle, as he directed, fronting the enemy at every point.

Meanwhile the assailants, having recovered from their amazement at his desertion, with a volley of cries and curses fell fiercely upon him and his little band.

"Come on, cowards!" he shouted, the fury of battle blazing in his eyes, his nostrils dilated, like a veritable Berserker's. "Come on, and we'll make crow's meat of you." Then he trolled out,

> "Drink, my Queen, the ruby nectar;
> Glut your thirst with lovers' blood!"

"Ha! Steady! Brave boys, steady! Slowly towards the gate! No haste! no crowding! Keep your distance. Well done, comrade!" (This to a man at his side who had neatly cut down an assailant.)

The fight was raging furiously around the entire

circle, the little band, outnumbered ten to one, holding together staunchly and fighting its way towards the gate.

Rossignol, in a frenzy of joy, was now shouting directions to his followers, now flinging derisive taunts at the enemy.

"Come on, villains!" he roared. "Would you taste the Queen's lip?" Then he burst into a lilting strain,

> "Lyingly lure them,
> Smilingly kiss them,—"

Crash! The bloody blade descended upon a luckless wight who, pushed from behind, had come within its deadly sweep. He fell, with his skull cloven, while the singer finished his aspotrophe to the Queen.

> "Fling them to hell!"

The fight grew ever more furious, the assailants enraged, the defenders fighting like heroes, under the eyes of their comrades on the walls who constantly cheered and fired, dealing death from their arquebuses.

All the while the little band was making headway towards the gate, Rossignol himself holding the rear, where the pressure was fiercest.

At the first, Étienne had found himself enclosed within the circle, along with the wounded and a few who could not get a place in the fighting rank. A delirium was upon him. What a moment! Around him a ring of men cutting, thrusting, parrying, gasping, cursing, shouting; above the din, Rossignol's war-chant, as maddening as the skirl of bagpipes to

fighting Highlanders. Étienne's young blood buzzed in his ears. Oh, for a chance at them!

Presently the man on Rossignol's left fell back with a ghastly wound. Instantly Étienne was in his place, crossing swords with the fellow who had dealt the blow. The latter, a sturdy varlet, grinned gleefully at the sight of his boyish opponent.

"Ha! Are you there, my son?" cried Rossignol. "Careful now! Careful! That fellow is an old hand. Well done, my lad!"

Étienne, parrying a wicked thrust, had sent his adversary reeling back, with blood streaming over his face.

A fierce exultation seized him. Oh, the ecstasy of fighting, of mastering a man! An instinct inherited from a long line of soldiers was throbbing in his brain and thrilling to his finger-tips.

Again Rossignol burst into song,

> "Cunningly cosset them,
> Tenderly fondle them—"

Ha, my boy! Steady! not so fast!"

The warning was needed. Étienne, swept away by the maddening joy of strife, was laying about him recklessly. A fresh man had taken the place in front of him, none other than the scowling ruffian, Baptiste, a world of malice in his sullen eye. He fought warily, luring his opponent on. Then suddenly his blade shot out straight under Étienne's ward. In that instant the Queen flashed like lightning upon the extended arm, and the sword fell at Étienne's feet with the severed fist in its guard.

"Ha, Baptiste! Did I not warn you that Frédégonde is this boy's friend?" Rossignol cried, then finished his invocation,

"Merrily murder them,
Sink them in hell!"

As the little band, working its way step by step, neared the gate, the fire from the ramparts waxed hotter, and many of the baffled assailants began to drop away and run to the shelter of their trenches. Then louder rose the cheering, and ever deadlier was the aim of the besieged.

"Curse you, Monster, for a scoundrel and traitor! You shall hang for this," roared a man who had been foremost among the assailants, shaking his sword wrathfully at Rossignol. "Come, mes garçons," he shouted to his comrades, "let us begone. We can't take them. But that devil won't be long out of our hands, and when we get hold of him, mordieu!—" Therewith he made a grimace, with a hideous gesture of tying a knot under his ear, then suddenly reeled, threw up his hands, and pitched forward on his face.

A panic seized his friends, and they broke away in a body. While they scurried to cover, followed by jeers and a hot fusillade, the remnant of the sally-party marched through the gate. As it clanged behind them a throng of citizens enclosed them, with vociferous greetings.

CHAPTER IV

ÉTIENNE MAKES A HAPPY DISCOVERY

WHILE the heroes of the day stood talking together, a soldierly figure, with a following of armed men, came clattering down a flight of stairs from the rampart.

"Who is this?" Rossignol asked of one of the citizens grouped admiringly around him and his young comrade.

"The Count de Montgommerie himself," the man answered. "Ma foi! he's a splendid soldier. He would have saved the city, if he had had men enough to fight the King's army in the field. But the Queen of England, — bah! she huckstered about the pay she should get for her troops, until it was too late, and he was shut up here like a rat in a trap."

"Look well at him," Rossignol said in an undertone to Étienne. "You will never again see a man who, by an accidental thrust of his lance, killed the King of France and robbed a queen of her husband and a duchess of her lover."

The Huguenot leader's keen eye quickly picked out Rossignol, and he strode up to him.

"By my faith, Monsieur," he said, saluting with his gauntleted hand, "That was as fine a piece of work as a soldier would see in a lifetime. I watched it

from the rampart. You saved our brave fellows. Whom are we to thank?"

"Roland Rossignol is my name, Monsieur le Comte," the minstrel answered, returning the salute with a wave of his sword; "a common soldier, at your service."

"A common soldier? Indeed you are not! Rather a most uncommon soldier. The rabble of the ranks flock where there is hope of booty. You have come where there is nothing to get — but honor."

Rossignol, flushing, drew himself up proudly. "Eagles, Monsieur le Comte, do not fly with carrion-crows. I chose my part knowing Rouen's need."

Montgommerie flashed a look of admiration at him. Then, his eye lighting on Étienne, he slapped him on the shoulder with, "Here's another gallant fellow. Oh, don't blush, my boy. We old soldiers are blunt in speech. From the rampart I noted your smooth face and I thought, 'What the devil does that youngster there?' But when I marked your pretty knack of handling your steel, 'Mordieu!' I said to myself, 'No fear for him. He's learned the trade in a good school.'"

"None better," Rossignol put in, smiling; "the Queen of Navarre's."

"What! How, in Heaven's name, came he up here in the North, and with you, a King's man until now?"

Rossignol rapidly related the incidents of Étienne's mission. When he came to tell of the scene at Navarre's headquarters, Montgommerie broke in, "What! drunk, in spite of his wound?"

"Yes, Bacchus in his brain and Venus at his side."

"The same light-headed Antony as ever," Montgommerie said, nodding. "And the letter?" he asked quickly, turning to Étienne.

"I have it here," the young messenger answered, touching the breast of his doublet.

Montgommerie extended his hand, saying abruptly, "Give it me!"

"I dare not, Monsieur le Comte," Étienne replied, drawing back. "My orders are explicit to give it into no hand but the King of Navarre's."

"Ma foi!" Montgommerie cried, slapping him again on the shoulder, "You are right, my boy. It matters not. In the pass that things have come to, the letter could not have a feather's weight. Ah! if your mistress could have stirred up Elizabeth of England to act the queen! But time presses. A word with you apart."

Therewith he drew the two men out of hearing of the curious crowd and, speaking low, rapidly sketched his plan.

He must save every man that he could to the cause. That night he would slip down the river with the pick of his force. In the morning, without a doubt, the magistrates would surrender the city. He ended with an offer to take the two men with him.

Rossignol's eyes brightened; but he turned inquiringly to Étienne.

Without a moment's hesitation Étienne answered, his chin held high, "Do you go by all means, Monsieur Rossignol. My place is here. I came for Rouen's good, and I shall share her fate."

Montgommerie, plainly chagrined, urged his offer.

Once out of Rouen, he said, he would make for Havre, unite with the English force there, hold the North till the Admiral and Condé could join him, then take the field again and drive the enemy back upon Paris. "Here," he added, "there is nothing before you but to be made prisoners. Go with me, and a commission awaits each of you, so soon as our army is re-formed."

Rossignol turned again eagerly to Étienne.

"Go you, Monsieur Rossignol," Étienne answered stoutly. "My place is here. Who knows but I may have a chance to serve some helpless folk?"

"Mort de ma vie!" Rossignol cried, his eyes flashing, and slapping his great hand on his young friend's shoulder. "The lad has taught me my duty. Thanks, Monsieur, for your offer! Here is my place."

"You know what your choice means?" Montgommerie insisted, with something of a frown. "This young gentleman's risk is small; but you, a marked man and a King's soldier —"

"Oh, aye, I know," Rossignol broke in. "Hanging is an ugly end for a soldier. But you need not pick your words. Many a good man and true has danced on nothing."

Montgommerie turned to meet a group of burghers who had come to consult him. After some minutes' conference with them in low tones he came back to our two friends, smiling and bringing with him the head man, a tall, elderly, official-looking person, dressed in a suit of dark-brown velvet, with a long gold chain about his neck.

"This," he said, "is Monsieur Rossignol, who has just now saved a band of our brave fellows from de-

struction. And this is his gallant young friend, Monsieur Cazenove. And this, gentlemen, is Monsieur André Marcel, Provost of Rouen. I have told him of your purpose to cast your lot with the city and share its fate. He will find a place for you."

The Provost greeted the newcomers with delighted cordiality.

"Thank God!" he exclaimed, "for bringing you to us. I know a household to whom, it may be, you can render priceless service. Follow me, gentlemen."

As they went he explained to them that he was taking them to the house of his brother's widow. She and her two daughters were without a protector.

Soon they came to a large square house fronting on the Rue des Ours. On their entrance they were welcomed by the mistress, a gracious and gentle woman, with soft, dark eyes and a manner that hinted the sobering effect of life's experiences on a naturally ardent disposition. The keen susceptibility of youth remained, but suffused in a kindliness that beamed in every look. As she extended her hand to greet Étienne she started, with an air of perplexity.

Next came the elder daughter, Madeleine, a tall, striking figure, handsome and stately, with fine forehead and eyes. Something in her manner as she came up beside her suggested a protecting attitude towards the gentle mother.

Then there was the younger, Marguerite, a young girl still, dainty and pretty, with sparkling eyes and with pearly teeth gleaming between rosy lips, as impulsive in demeanor as her sister was self-contained.

When Provost Marcel introduced the two men as

friends who had come to act as a guard, their welcome was doubly assured.

As soon as they had washed and refreshed themselves, the guests were bidden to dinner. The fare was frugal, for the siege pinched every larder in Rouen, but the glow of good-will and the fascination of womanly companionship made the simple meal a feast for the two men, starved of the graces of life. After they had eaten they still sat and talked.

Presently Madame Marcel said to Étienne, "Your accent hints that you come from the South. Am I correct?"

"Yes, Madame."

"From what part, may I ask?"

"From the Pyrenees."

"From Lourdes?" She was leaning toward him with eager interest.

"Yes, Madame; from Lourdes."

"Your father is the village pastor? And your mother was Valérie de Beaupré?" she asked breathlessly, her kind eyes beaming.

"Just so, Madame," Étienne returned, amazed.

"Come to my arms, my child! Your mother was my dearest friend in all the world," the lady cried. Then she embraced him, kissed his forehead, held him at arm's length, gazed into his eyes, then embraced and kissed him again, while he blushed like a girl.

"The moment that I saw you," she cried, "something in your look thrilled me. Now it is all plain. Oh, I have loved you, my child, from the hour of your birth. You do not remember your mother, dear?"

"Only faintly, Madame. I have a dim memory of a pale face and a shadowy figure, no more."

"Ah, yes. It was sad beyond expression that her sweet young life was so early cut off. But you know her story, doubtless."

"No, Madame. Beyond her mere name I know almost nothing. When I inquired of my father he was so deeply affected that I must needs spare him. The little knowledge I have of my mother I gained from my old nurse, Nannette. That she came from the North, that she was young and fair, and that she died early, is all I know. But you will tell me the story of her life, will you not?"

"Yes, you shall hear it. It is, alas! all too short." Then, with Étienne sitting beside her, his hand in hers, she said:

"From my childhood my dearest friend was Valérie de Beaupré. Our homes were near Yvetot, which is not many miles away. She grew up a beautiful creature, with great, tender eyes. But she was fragile as a flower. Our first trouble came with the new doctrine. Her family and mine, the Montcorbiers, were among the few people of consideration in the North who took any interest in it. Alas! each household became divided. Valérie's mother became Protestant; her father clung to the old faith. My father and his brother accepted the reformed teachings; my mother thought them a deadly delusion. Valérie held with her mother; I, with my father. Here was a bond that strengthened our friendship. While my home was not seriously disturbed by difference of faith, and my father's full sympathy was with me,

she, poor child, must endure her father's anger. He was a proud and violent man, could see nothing more in his wife's and daughter's new belief than sheer wilfulness and made their existence wretched.

"After I married and came to live in Rouen, Valérie spent much time with me. It was a joy to her to escape from the gloom of her father's house and to come here, where life was simple and natural. And in this house she met Philippe Cazenove, a licentiate of theology, many years older than herself, lately come from Geneva. Her heart hungered for affection, and as for him, how could he help loving the beautiful girl? Her mother, I should have said, had pined away and died. So they soon plighted their troth.

"Her father, when he heard of it, was furious, and much of his anger was turned against us. He wrote my husband a letter full of insult. Such waywardness as his daughter's, he declared, was the natural fruit of the infamous heresy that was turning the world upside down. He had forbidden her, he said, further intercourse with us. For months I had no word from Valérie. She was constantly watched. To my amazement, one day, she came in, haggard and worn. In desperation, she had fled her father's house. Then came a letter from him disowning her, cutting her off from her inheritance, abandoning her, he said, to the low-born associates whom she had chosen. Now she was free to follow her heart, and Philippe Cazenove, poor himself, was happy to take her, dowerless as she was. So they were united here, in this house. My husband, who was like an elder brother to her, gave her in marriage.

"Her husband had been assigned by the Synod to a charge at Lourdes, and they went away to it. Letters came from her at long and ever longer intervals. Though they always assured me that she was happy, I could not but see that a shadow was creeping over her life. Then came a new brightness. A little son lay in her arms. How happy she was in him! Life had grown so much richer and fuller. Étienne she called him, for my husband." She paused and glanced inquiringly at Étienne.

"It is my name," he assented.

She continued:

"For some time the new joy brightened her sombre life. Then I felt the shadow creeping back. No word of hers hinted it. Her letters were always brave. But, somehow, I divined it. At last came a letter so full of tenderness that it smote me. It seemed a leave-taking. I hastened to reply. For many months there was no word. Then I received a letter in her husband's handwriting. I surmised its contents before I had broken the seal. It was even so. The tender flower had faded away. Then I learned all the story that she had concealed, of her long, brave struggle. Remorsefully her husband pictured the poverty and cruel hardness of their lot, grieving as if he had led her to her death.

"What solace could I offer to a sorrow like his? For a year or two he answered my letters, but with growing reserve. I fancied him embittered. Finally all communication ceased, and until now I have not known whether my friend's child still lived.

"See!" she said, bringing him a locket containing

a miniature. "This is a portrait of your dear mother. It was her last gift to me. Some day it shall be yours."

The picture showed a girlish face, of a wistful, pathetic beauty, with large, dark eyes, and a mass of rippling hair.

"You have her eyes," said Madame Marcel. "Something in them thrilled me the instant I looked into them. And, now, my child, may I not be as a mother to you?"

"Ah, Madame" — he faltered, pressed her hand to his lips, and could say no more.

CHAPTER V

THE QUEEN SINGS IN THE DREADFUL NIGHT

THE evening of the next day the inmates of Madame Marcel's house were alert and anxious. During the night Montgommerie had slipped away down the river with the pick of the garrison. Early in the day the civil authorities had surrendered the city, receiving from the Duke of Guise a solemn pledge of protection for life and property. Then, with beat of drum and blare of trumpet, the royalist army had entered, the dying King of Navarre, vanity defying death, borne in a litter in the triumphal procession.

Soon followed ominous signs of ill-discipline, growing worse as the day wore on. Soldiers roamed the city without restraint, in boisterous groups. In the less frequented streets they allowed themselves most offensive license, insulting quiet citizens. By evening the town was full of disorder, and householders were in a panic.

Rossignol and Étienne had locked, bolted, and barricaded the doors and extinguished every light. The house stood dark and silent. Now, as its inmates watched, they heard soldiers passing in groups, singing drunken and ribald songs. With darkening night the sounds grew more shockingly significant. More and more frequent were reports of firearms. Now

and again there were cries, howls of brutal fury, shrieks of helpless terror.

The women sat in a back room, trembling and shivering. The two men occupied the wide hall. Every article of furniture had been removed, and the heavier pieces piled against the door. The spacious hall, bare and empty, afforded an ideal arena for the sweep of Rossignol's sword. An arquebuse had been found in the house. Rossignol disdained it. He had never, he said, lowered himself "to the use of chemical explosives in war." But he had not any such scruples for Étienne and he proceeded to instruct him how to manage the weapon.

The handling of powder and lead evidently went sorely against the grain, and he muttered, while loading the weapon, "Mort de ma vie! These damnable chemical methods are killing out the old breed of soldiers. I would not, my boy, for worlds have you sink to the level of habitually using such devices. Fancy Du Guesclin or Bayard poking out an iron tube charged with the vile compound, sticking fire to it, and blowing a hole through an enemy! Faugh! The mere fancy sickens one. If these degrading customs grow, farewell to valor and minstrelsy! Hail to the alchemist and the poisoner! But we must e'en fight the Devil with fire. I am putting in a liberal charge of the stuff and of lead slugs. Mordieu! I'd like to see you pour it into a pack of the skulking hounds."

His task done, he paced fuming up and down the hallway.

Suddenly a fearful shriek, the cry of a woman in terror, pierced the night.

Rossignol ground his teeth and smote the tiled floor with his sheathed weapon, until the Queen rattled. "Dogs! Would that I were there! Frédégonde and I would make carrion of some of them."

Presently a hand tried the door, and, finding it fastened, knocked loudly.

Without a word, Rossignol, taking a candle, softly led the way up-stairs. Leaving the light where it would not betray him, he stole forward and peered out of a window purposely left open over the doorway. About the low steps were three men, one of them knocking sharply with the hilt of his sword.

"Open!" he cried. "It will cost you the dearer, if you do not open quickly."

"All right, my lad! You shall have an answer very speedily," muttered Rossignol, coming back on tiptoe, picking up the candle and going to the kitchen, where a huge cauldron was bubbling over the fire.

"I will decant a little of this fine old vintage of Father Adam for the entertainment of our guests," he said, "and do you, my lad, light your match and stand ready to salute them with a feu de joie."

So saying, with a handy vessel he dipped up several gallons of the boiling water, led the way up-stairs, and stole as softly as a cat towards the window, Étienne, arquebuse and lighted match in hand, close at his heels.

The ruffians in the street were by this time uproarious. They were all pounding on the door with their sword-hilts.

"Open!" one cried. "If you keep us longer waiting, you fools, we'll bring a beam and batter down the door. Then the worse for you!"

Suddenly Rossignol leaned forward and emptied the whole contents of his vessel on their heads.

Hideous yells followed, and two fell, drenched with the scalding fluid, and writhed on the ground, tearing at their clothing. The third had caught enough of the boiling liquid to make him dance with pain and rage. He retreated to the opposite side of the street, pouring out curses and threats.

"Your turn, now, my boy," whispered Rossignol, laying his hand on Étienne's shoulder. "Rest your barrel on the window-sill. So! Now get a bead on that fellow, while I entertain him with a little chaff, and then give him a dose in his vitals."

Leaning out, he remarked pleasantly, "Excuse us, Gentlemen, for giving you so poor a reception. Hot pitch would have been the right stuff, and we should have had it ready for you, if you had given us notice of your coming. But we've done the best we could."

Meanwhile Étienne, resting his arquebuse on the window-sill, drew a sight on the shadowy figure opposite. At the moment that he applied the match, its glow warned his intended victim, and he started aside, but too late to save himself wholly. There was a loud report, and Étienne staggered back, well-nigh floored by the recoil, while the marauder fell to the ground howling.

"Well done, my boy!" cried Rossignol. "If that vermin had not jumped at the sight of the match, you would have made a sieve of him. Ha! he is on his feet and getting away. He must not be allowed to escape, else we shall have a pack of them here. After him, and finish him!"

The wounded man had indeed staggered to his feet and was tottering away into the darkness.

"Here!" said Rossignol, pointing to the window. "Get out and give me your hands. I'll lower you. By the way, just give a friendly jab to those miscreants in the gutter. It will be a kindness to them, and it will make our situation safer."

"It's too late. The alarm is already given," said Étienne, catching sight of two men coming up the street. Therewith he scrambled back, with Rossignol's help, and the latter quickly closed the window.

The newcomers halted, keeping a cautious distance. After surveying the dark front of the house, they walked rapidly away, without paying heed to the injured men moaning before the door-step.

"Those fellows mean mischief," said Rossignol. "If we had but had a chance of stopping their breath! Now let us prepare."

More water was set to boil, and Rossignol proceeded to re-charge the arquebuse.

"You are so efficient with this weapon, it is a pity you have so great a prejudice against it," remarked Étienne, dryly.

"What do you mean?"

"Your charges are superb. If they should do no harm in front, they would still do sure work behind. My shoulder still aches."

Rossignol smiled grimly and took the hint. When all was ready, Étienne sat down in silence and waited, while his companion paced the floor, chafing. All the while the night was hideous with ominous sounds.

They had not waited long when there came from the street a murmur of many voices.

"There they come," said Rossignol, quietly.

"Open!" was shouted. "If you do not quickly let us in, we'll batter down the door."

Rossignol from the dark room reconnoitered the situation, without deigning a syllable of reply.

"Get ready to give them a dose of your chemicals, while I administer an old-fashioned pill," he said low to Étienne. At the same time he went to a pile of stones which the two had during the day brought in from the back yard and stored in the room.

"Here is a neat little love's messenger," he said, selecting a ponderous stone which Étienne had with some difficulty brought up in both hands. Poising it easily, he hurled it through the open window at the shadowy group opposite. A thud, and something like a gasp followed.

"God's wounds! Goblet is done for!" cried one. "Would you believe it, boys, his skull is crushed. The Miller of Languedoc, who used his millstones for quoits, must be in that house."

"It's the Monster, surely," said another. "Nobody else could have done it, and, you know, he's hiding somewhere in the city."

"Quick, boys! Let us get a beam and smash the door! What is the use of standing here, to be pelted to death?" cried another.

Before they could act on the suggestion the reports of Étienne's arquebuse rang out, and two men in the thick group fell.

Consternation seized the assailants, and they fell back to a safe distance to hold a council of war.

"Bring a beam for a battering-ram," said one who seemed to have some authority. "And some of you fetch firearms, to keep them away from the window while we work it."

This proposal met with favor, and the party broke up, going in different directions,

An ominous stillness followed, broken only by the dreadful sounds that came occasionally from the city.

"It has been child's play so far," said Rossignol. "When they come again, there will be real work. We've done just enough to infuriate them. How sweet is blood! These dogs prefer it to pillage."

He was right. The assailants soon appeared in larger numbers and better equipped. On they came, with a steady tramp, and Rossignol, peering out of the window, saw a dark mass approaching.

"Aha!" he exclaimed. "The Queen will be heard now. There's going to be hot work."

"Down!" he suddenly cried, pulling Étienne beside him on the floor. He had caught the glow of a match in the front of the dark column. His warning and movement were none too quick. There was a loud report, and a handful of bullets whistled through the open window and buried themselves in the opposite wall.

"Now for your reply! Quick!" he cried.

Étienne raised his arquebuse, pointed it at the dense dark mass, and fired, with telling effect.

"Quick! before he has time to load again!" shouted a voice in the crowd.

On the instant, a number of men came up, at a run, with a great beam. One of them dropped, felled by a ponderous stone, but another quickly took his place.

Fast as Étienne could supply him Rossignol hurled his huge missiles. Still again and again the improvised battering-ram thundered against the door. At first the stout oak withstood every shock. Then there came a sound of wood splitting.

"Ah! the door is giving way," cried Rossignol. "Below is our place! Now, my lad," — and he gripped Étienne's arm tightly, as they hurried down the stairs, — "we have come to our last blow. Think of your mother, your sister — if you have one — and die like a man!"

With a final crash the beam thundered against the door, and the riven oak fell in a wreck. A shout of triumph went up from the assailants.

"The light to the front!" cried a voice in the crowd.

A man forced his way from the rear and came forward bearing a torch and held it aloft.

On one side, it lighted a dense half-circle of evil faces, frenzied with rage; on the other, a motionless figure, sword in hand, behind the shattered door, impassive as if carved in stone.

In his shadow stood Étienne, pale, head thrown back, eyes flashing, lips set, not a muscle quivering.

A moment the mob of ruffians gazed in silence, as once the barbarians of Gaul stared at the senators of Rome. Then the spell was broken.

"Monster! Renegade!" a single voice cried. Instantly the whole rabble burst into a roar of curses.

Not a word Rossignol uttered, while the assailants

stood yelling at bay, none impatient to exchange words for blows.

"Forward! Are you afraid of one man?" cried some in the rear, pushing petulantly. Then the crowd surged forward, forcing the front rank into action.

One fellow leaped upon the door-step, aiming a pike at the lone defender. Quicker than thought the Queen parried the thrust, then flashed out in a long lunge, and the assailant fell pierced from breast to back.

His fall was the signal for a general onslaught. With a howl, the mob hurled itself in a mass into the doorway. Too wary to expose himself and lose the advantage of his position, Rossignol had withdrawn a pace into the hall, which gave ample room for the sweep of his giant arm and mighty blade.

Now, as the rabble, pushed from behind, crowded the narrow entrance, he plied them fast, pitiless as Fate, with point and edge. The Queen, in lightning flashes, parrying, cutting, thrusting, quickly piled the entrance with dead and dying, while the fiercer the fighting, the more furiously the mob yelled and pushed.

Still, this could not last forever, Étienne said to himself. Some lucky thrust would reach the solitary defender. Then his own turn would come, and after him —

Suddenly a new uproar arose in the rear, and, with clash of steel and clatter of hoofs, a troop of horsemen burst through the rabble, riding them down, cutting right and left without mercy.

"To your kennels! ye curs!" cried their leader, reining up his panting horse in front of the house.

"'Tis Guise himself," said Rossignol over his shoulder to Étienne. "He pledged his honor, you know, to the Provost that there should be no sack."

"Your Grace," said one of the rabble, sulkily, wiping blood from his face, "that house is full of Lutheran soldiers. That fellow in the doorway is a deserter. Only yesterday he left us, on the field, and went over to the enemy."

"Brave fellow! I salute you," cried Guise, waving his hand to the figure standing behind the writhing heap in the doorway. "You have done good service to your king and country to-night."

The grim statue, without a word, lowered its dripping sword, in acknowledgment, then resumed its motionless attitude.

An officer at Guise's side, frowning at Rossignol, expostulated in a low tone with his leader.

"I care not," the stout soldier flung out. "Deserter or not, he shall go free and unscathed, for his brave work to-night. He has done better than my own officers. Away, canaille!" he cried to the remnant of the mob lingering to hear the outcome.

As the rabble skulked off, a company of archers came on the scene.

"Captain Larchant," said Guise to its officer, "do you post a guard here, with orders to kill on the spot any one who approaches to molest the inmates of this house. If I could be in a hundred places at once, I might stop this devilish work."

Then he struck his spurs into his horse and galloped off, with his escort clattering behind him.

The Captain, muttering something about being

sworn to serve the King, not to protect heretics and traitors, turned to his detachment of archers and commanded, "Davol and Réboeuf to the front!"

Two men came forward. Sullenly repeating to them his orders, he left them at their post and marched away.

The fellows cast a surly glance at the house, and then, cursing the luck that condemned them to such pitiful gleaning, busied themselves with rifling the pockets of their dead comrades.

CHAPTER VI

ROSSIGNOL'S STORY

THE next morning a sullen silence like the gloom of a man who has been on a debauch over night hung over the city.

"Ma foi!" said Rossignol to Étienne, "I do not trust those fellows. See how sulky they look! Enraged, I warrant you, because they have not had a hand in the loot. While daylight lasts we are safe. But when it is dark, the curs who were driven off will come sneaking back for their revenge, and, my word for it, our guard will join them."

"What can we do?"

"We must get these ladies away from this house as speedily as possible. We cannot defend it forever, two men against a mob."

"But what place is safer?"

"None in Rouen, certainly. But Havre is."

"Could we reach it?"

"Why not? Montgommerie with a large force got away safely. Surely a small party like ours can slip away. Once landed at Havre, we shall be safe under the English flag. Then these ladies can quietly await better times, while we can take service with Montgommerie. Now let us hear what they say to our plan."

The three women were called into council and immediately assented, glad to take the risks of flight rather than of remaining where they were. Madame Marcel had an aunt, Madame Montcorbier, in Havre with whom she and her daughters might find refuge.

"But by what road can we get out?" she asked. "The enemy hold all the approaches to the city."

"Except the river," answered Rossignol. "That must be open, since Montgommerie got away by that route. Indeed, his escape has made me think of the plan."

"Has he not seized all the boats on the river?" said Étienne, quickly. "I fear that he has."

"That is the chief trouble I apprehend," said Rossignol. "I will go to the water-side and secure a boat, if one is to be had."

"That is not to be thought of," put in Étienne, promptly. "You are too well known. Where should we be if you were taken from us? No, this errand is for me. Trust me for all the arrangements."

"You are right," Rossignol said, with a tinge of bitterness. "Mine is a marked figure. For these ladies' sake, I must keep myself close. Do you go, then, my lad."

"Can you tell me, Madame, where to look for a boatman?" Étienne asked.

"There is Robert Jumel, Mama," Madeleine interposed quickly. "Only the other day I met him on the street, and he asked me whether, in these trying times, he could not serve us in some way."

"Faithful fellow! You must know, Gentlemen," said Madame Marcel, with a look of mingled tender-

ness and pride, "My husband was a physician and had it in his power to do much for the poor. The most have forgotten his kindness. But this Robert Jumel is not of that sort. He is a boatman plying on the river to Havre; and I am sure that he will gladly serve us, if he can."

"Where can he be found?" asked Rossignol, briskly. "There is no time to be lost."

"The Anchor Inn, on the riverside, is a great resort for the watermen who are of the Religion," Marguerite put in. "There he can surely be heard of."

As his young friend walked briskly away, Rossignol glanced at the ladies with a quick look of admiration that was returned approvingly, Marguerite's bright eyes brighter than ever.

"There goes a lad as true as steel and as fearless as — as Roland," he said when he came back from barring the gate after Étienne. "God knows what he may encounter; but out he goes, with his quiet manner, as debonair as if he were strolling in a May meadow."

"Tell us about him, Monsieur Rossignol. He is so interesting," said Marguerite, coming up to the minstrel and looking wistfully into his face.

So Rossignol told how he met with Étienne, the women grouped around him full of eager interest and sympathy. When he pictured the woebegone figure of the youth as he first saw him, "Poor boy!" exclaimed Madeleine, while Marguerite's bright eyes swam. Then Rossignol went on to tell of the Queen of Navarre's letter.

"A letter from our Queen! Then he has her confidence," said Madeleine.

"Yes, and it shows him to be a person of consequence," Marguerite added.

"Dear child! What a risk for him!" their mother exclaimed tenderly.

"A very well-grown child, I should say, Mama," Marguerite remarked, bridling somewhat.

So, with preparations for departure and occasional conversation, the day wore on. As the sun neared its setting, and still Étienne came not, they began to glance anxiously from one to another. It was quite dusk when they heard his knock at the gate.

He was greeted with a chorus of joyful exclamations.

"Dear boy!" said Madame Marcel, in her motherly way, "we have been so anxious for you. What has kept you so long?"

"Only a trifle," he answered. Then he told his story. He had reached the water-side unquestioned and had found Jumel without difficulty, but had waited to see a leaky boat repaired, that he might report it in readiness.

Then the little company sat down to their last meal. It was a gloomy one. These gentle women were leaving their old home. Not an object their eyes rested on but was rich with the associations of a lifetime.

Silent and sad the little party went out through the back gate, Rossignol in advance, carrying under one arm a bag filled with silverware, under the other a precious treasure-trove, a lute which he had found in the house. Next came the girls. Madame Marcel followed, leaning on Étienne's arm. At the quay they

found the fishing-boat, manned by Jumel and two stalwart sons.

"I must stow you below until we have passed the patrol," he said. "Down the river, at the city limits, there's a guard on either bank and a boat between."

So down they crouched in the hold, which was dry and had been littered with clean straw. His fare stowed away, the skipper and his sons drew over them a spare canvas. Then the line was thrown off, the sail hoisted, and the boat dropped down the river with the light breeze.

"Hist!" Jumel presently called softly down the hatch-way, "we are nearing the guard-boat. Lie down and keep still!"

That was the crucial moment. How their hearts beat!

Then came the patrol's hail, "Let go your sheet and come about!"

"Aye, aye, sir," promptly returned the skipper, loosing his sheet and putting his helm hard down.

The sail flapped against the mast, as the boat came up into the wind; and the officer of the watch climbed over the guard.

"Where are you bound?"

"For the channel, M'sieu, fishing."

"How many aboard?"

"Three, M'sieu; me and my two boys."

"What's in your hold?"

"A spare sail, a tarpaulin, and fishing-gear, M'sieu."

The officer leaned over the hatch-way, held his lantern down, peered into the hold, and saw nothing suspicious.

"All right! Go ahead," he cried, and got into his boat.

"Thank God! We are safe!" Rossignol ejaculated, low.

"Heigho, Messieurs and Mesdames," the skipper called to them cheerily, as the craft got under way once more, the water rippling under her bow, and the boys pulled away the covering of sail, "doesn't it feel good to be free?"

"And to be able to breathe," exclaimed Marguerite, drawing in deeply the crisp air. "Don't let us stay longer in this close place. Mama dear, can you bear the air on deck?"

Madame Marcel thought she could. There was no objection, Jumel said; the river was clear before them. So the little party settled themselves on deck, the women with their wraps drawn close about them; Madame Marcel, with Madeleine, her watchful keeper, huddled against the guard on one side; opposite them Marguerite, between Étienne and Rossignol.

"Étienne," said Marguerite, "I am sure you must be freezing, poor fellow! You have no cloak. Mine is large enough for us both. Come closer, and it will keep us very snug."

He shyly protested that he was quite comfortable. In vain! She extended her arm, with one end of her cloak, around his shoulders. What could he do but take hold of it and draw it about him? Then she folded her end close about her and snuggled against him with most charming and innocent freedom.

For Étienne there was a subtle fascination in this

utterly novel experience, despite a small voice whispering, "Félicie!"

Ah! Félicie, indeed! There she stood before his mind's eye, as he last saw her, sooth to say, no pleasing picture, perking insolently, with defiant toss of her golden curls, her blue eyes lighted with scornful mirth, holding out her finger-tips to the lad who was going away to fight their people's battles.

For Félicie was far from responsive to his advances. The two had grown up side by side from the cradle, he the village pastor's son, she the only child of Matthieu Bellange, the rich miller and chief man of Lourdes. Together they had learned their letters at his father's knee. Growing older they had still shared the same studies and sports. Providence, not less than the common voice of the villagers and a tacit agreement of the two fathers — the boy's mother was long since dead, and the girl's did not count — plainly destined them for man and wife.

But Félicie, as she neared womanhood, had begun to betray a singular perversity toward her life-long playmate. As a companion he was tolerated; but let him, accepting in all good faith, as if it were part of the divine order, the convention that allotted them to each other, venture on the least loverlike demeanor, he was sure to meet either cold rebuff or more wounding levity.

The climax had come when, to the great disconcert of his father, who had in his mind's eye other men's sons, he responded to a fervent appeal from the pulpit calling on the youth of the country to take up arms for the Cause, by announcing his intention to join

Queen Jeanne's levy at Pau. Félicie made light of his enthusiasm, derided his purpose as a boyish whim, and, failing to shake him, at their leave-taking, flouted him as pointedly as she dared under her father's watchful eye. In this attitude she was, on the one hand, encouraged by her parent's pronounced sympathy on that particular point, on the other held in check by the fear of seeming to rashly imperil an alliance which she knew to be his dearest dream.

It may be that the thought of this fiancée by parental compact was not just the influence needed, if any was, to hinder Étienne Cazenove from enjoying the proximity of a very pretty and charming girl. At all events, it did not. He let himself go, delighted.

On they glided softly down the dim river, its banks faintly seen now on this hand, now on that; not a sound but the swash against the boat's side and the rustle of the bellying canvas, once and again the whirr of unseen flights of sea-fowl taking wing, a word now and then from the skipper, or a warning cry from the lad at the bow, as a sail loomed up in the darkness, then flitted by, a phantom. The glamour of it all held the little company spell-bound and mute.

Madame Marcel was the first to break the silence, with a request that Rossignol would sing. He cheerfully complied and sang first the famous Ballad of Fair Women. His delighted audience begged for more. Thus urged, he sang on and on, voicing his dreams of womanly worth and manly honor; and his hearers were thrilled.

"Pardon me, Monsieur Rossignol," presently said Madame Marcel, in her impulsive way, "I would not

for worlds ask a reluctant confidence; yet may we not know our benefactor? You have opened to us a world of light and beauty. The revealer himself stands in the shadow. If we may, we would gladly know something of your life. Surely, you have not always followed the rude career of a private soldier."

Rossignol was silent for a moment. Then he said simply, "Madame, you have touched me deeply. Since you wish it, I shall not refuse to tell the story of my life."

"I was born in a castle, — it matters not in what part of this realm. My father was wont to boast that his ancestors have fought on every famous field since Gaul became France. When I was a boy the misfortune of my misshapen form already began to be visited on me. My brothers mocked and gibed at me. My father looked coldly on me. He cared little for a son whom nature seemed to have barred forever from knightly sports and courtly shows. My brothers flouted me. Even valets and horse-boys treated me with insolence. In all the world I had no friend but my gentle mother. It was a woeful day for me when God took her to himself. In my grief I sought solace in the world of imagination. From childhood I had been a bookish boy. It was a favorite taunt of my brothers that I knew more Latin than the clownish priest who taught me its rudiments. The few romances the castle contained I had devoured. I knew every story of every one of them.

"Now I lived more than ever in a world of dreams. Withal I was a pious lad, fit only for a shaveling monk my brothers said. So often I had heard that gibe I

no longer gave heed to it. But one day my father gave it new meaning. I possessed gifts, he told me, with a cold smile, that assured me a great career in the Church. He had arranged matters with his friend, the prior of a neighboring abbey, and there I was to enter at once on my novitiate.

"No voluntary recluse ever began the monastic life with purer purpose than I. My mother had taught me to love prayer and the Church. I accepted my father's mandate as if from Heaven, and fondly hoped to find in the monastery the work that God meant me to do. There was none in the house more scrupulously obedient to every rule than I. Alas! I soon learned how hollow a sham was the religious life for the most of my companions, for whom the cloister was either a convenient shelter for laziness and lewdness, or else a coign of vantage for selfish ambitions. Only a woeful few served God sincerely.

"The miserable pretense sickened me, and my faith wavered. Was religion a reality? Here were scores of lazy rogues who had their living dirt-cheap, at the world's charges, full-fed and sleeping warm, with reverence done them in every cot, at the cost of a few prayers and chants. What cared they for the people without, burning and freezing, toiling, sweating, starving, to maintain these holy drones? I began to say to myself that it was a cruel, shameful cheat. Did I not see sleek churchmen, well placed by favor, amble on their fat palfreys to ecclesiastical councils to hold high debate on everlasting quibbles? Or was it perchance to devise new pretenses for juggling pence from the pockets of the poor?

"For a long season I was in fearful doubt. Many an hour I spent on my knees, praying for light. No light came. God seemed as vain a refuge as the Baal of the false prophets. I still went through the daily routine, kneeling, chanting, serving all the prescribed functions; but my heart was like ice.

"One day I was in the library alone, moodily turning over some of the musty folios entombing a dead theology. I strayed by chance into an unfrequented corner, where, among dusty volumes, a new one caught my eye. I opened it. When the bell rang for nones, I heard it not. The dinner-hour came; I heeded it not. I first came to myself when vespers rang. I threw down the volume and ran to chapel, light-hearted. The book was the Orlando Furioso. It had broken the spell of my melancholy. My spirit had flown away from the narrow cloister to the old world of romance that I loved. I must needs do penance for my neglect of nones. What matter? I had found a mine. The dusty nook contained many a choice treasure of romance gathered by a former prior who cherished books.

"Daily I hied me to my bower of delights and lost myself in sweet oblivion of my surroundings. The hue of health came back to my cheeks and brightness to my eyes. The brethren noted how cheerful I had grown and how studious. Nobody asked or cared what reading so engrossed me. Our prior, good, easy man, no martinet in discipline or bigot in theology, gave little thought to his flock's doings, so long as they brought no outrageous scandal upon the house and left him to his hunting and hawk-

ing, his wine and venison-pasties — and other diversions.

"All the while I was nearing the end of my novitiate. Then I must take the vows. Never! But how escape them? That was my problem. One day a listless mood came over me. Even reading irked me. The year's bright noontide was upon us, and through the open casement came the warm June air, laden with fragrance and musical with the song of birds. I laid down my book and went to the window. Beneath it were two monks. One, a fat fellow, lolling on the grass, with his hood drawn over his eyes, laughed until his huge girth shook at a lewd story which his chum, a lean, hollow-cheeked, furtive-eyed rogue, seated beside him, leaning forward, poured into his ear.

"I turned with disgust from these robust saints. In the near distance the glebe stretched its sunny acres, bounded by a stately forest, brave in its greenery. Beyond, in a long gleam of silver, the river sped seaward. On its bosom a white sail made for the ocean. The surging deep rolled before my mind's eye. In fancy I visited busy marts, I roamed far lands. How I longed to go forth into the great, bright world and share its throbbing life! But the detested vows — and only three weeks more!

"With a heavy sigh I picked up my book again. It was the sweet old tale of Aucassin and Nicolette, but it told itself that day to dull ears. Suddenly I came upon a passage that sent the blood thrilling through my veins. It was where Aucassin, bidden renounce the girl he loved and gain Paradise, says,

'What have I to do in Paradise? I seek not to enter there, but let me have Nicolette, my sweet friend, whom I love so much. Into Paradise none go except those old priests and those old and crippled ones who all day and all night grovel before altars and in old crypts; and those clothed in old, worn cloaks and in old rags; those who are naked and barefoot and full of sores; those who die of hunger and of thirst and of cold and of miseries. These go to Paradise. With them have I nothing to do. But into Hell I wish to go. For into hell go the goodly scholars and brave knights who have died in the tourneys and in the great wars; and the good soldier and the true man. There go also the gold and the silver, and the rich furs; and there go also the harper and the minstrel and the kings of the world. With these I wish to go, only let me have Nicolette, my sweet friend, with me.'

"'Ah! there was a brave fellow!' I said to myself. 'He knew his mind and dared trust it. For love's sweet sake he would venture all. He was no weakling, pining in a cloister at others' bidding, but was willing to stake eternity on one glorious cast.'

"From that moment I knew my heart. It was not in the things that priests tell of, but out in the world where men live strenuously, sinning and suffering — but living. And from that moment I have been free. I resolved that I would not longer abuse God's good gifts by hiding them in a sluggard's shelter. Out into the great world I would go. I would cast behind me all my past life — my ties of birth and family, my outworn beliefs, even my name. I would win my way

with only my Maker's gifts, my brain, my heart, and my sinews."

"But, Monsieur Rossignol," Madame Marcel put in, with troubled eagerness, "you still had a religious faith, had you not? Oh, I am sure that you had."

"Yes, Madame," he answered reverently, "I have a faith, simple, indeed — it would scarce suffice a theologian, and for lack of more many a good man has died at the stake — but an ample creed I have found it for every need."

"May I ask," Madeleine interrupted quickly, "what it is?"

"See how mighty you are," laughed Rossignol. "No man has ever heard a confession of faith from me. The Grand Inquisitor could not wring one from me. You speak but a word, and it is enough. I believe, Mademoiselle, in the everlasting trinity which all true men adore: God, the Soul of the world; pure and loving womanhood; brave and honest manhood."

There was a moment's silence. Then Madame Marcel said simply, "Now finish your story, pray. We are deeply interested, and I promise not to interrupt you again."

"Dear lady, I am deeply grateful for such an interruption," Rossignol replied. "But why should I prolong my tale? The die was cast on that bright June day when I resolved that my place was not in a cloister. Shortly thereafter, one morning my cell was empty. When the sun rose I was long leagues away, floating down the river on a sea-bound craft, light in purse, but lighter in heart, all the world before me, with naught but my brain and my own two

hands to open any one of its doors. Landed at the port of my destination, far beyond the reach of pursuit, I sought the means of earning my bread. I offered my services to a smith trolling a merry ballad at his anvil. He looked at my white, soft hands, smiled, and shook his head.

"Feel my arm," I said.

He did, and hesitated. "Your name?" he asked.

"'Roland Rossignol,' I answered, giving the name I had chosen, — Roland, for knightly manhood; Rossignol, for music and minstrelsy, — the ideals I set before me."

"'My certes! It is a good one. Live up to it, and you need not envy priest or prince,' the jolly smith answered.

"Forthwith he took me as his apprentice, and from him I learned lessons of manhood the cloister could never have taught me. I ate the sweet bread of honest labor, slept the dreamless sleep of downright weariness, and owed nothing to those who had disowned me. I purposed making for myself my little place in the world only by the use of God's gifts. And I have not failed utterly. Such as I am, I am debtor only to my Maker. I learned the trade of an armorer; I developed my strength; I gained skill in arms; and when I left my master I could both make and wield a sword, as the Queen" — (fondly tapping the hilt of his mighty blade) — "will testify. When my apprenticeship was ended I went forth to see the world. Everywhere my little gift of song, which I had cultivated at the anvil, won me friends. I have wandered in many lands and seen —"

"Boat ahoy!" a hoarse voice shouted in English, and a guard-boat manned by brawny English sailors pulled swiftly towards them.

Ah, surely, there was the meteor flag of England flying over men-of-war and forts! At the same moment came over the water the rattle of English drums beating the réveillée on French soil. Absorbed in Rossignol's story, the fugitives had come, with the daylight, within sight of Havre, without perceiving it. Strange and sad! To a foreign power they owed their safety on their native soil!

CHAPTER VII

WESTWARD HO!

A FEW weeks later Rossignol and Étienne strolled along the waterside, silent and dejected.

At the first their sojourn in Havre had been full of delight and hope. They spent much of their time with the Marcels, who were domiciled with their aunt, Madame Montcorbier; and the companionship of these gentle women was like sunshine and the scent of flowers. For Étienne especially it was an experience both novel and fascinating. Here were women such as, until he met them, he had never known or dreamed of. They made very real to him the story of his lovely young mother. His childhood and youth had felt no such sweet influence as that which he now intimately enjoyed.

Then there was pleasant association with a wide circle of acquaintance. The town, the centre of the Huguenot interests in the North, swarmed with refugees. Montgommerie was there with his force, daily augmented by recruits from the surrounding country. The English auxiliaries were there; and over all flew England's friendly flag, a guarantee of safety. In spite of the fall of Rouen and its hideous sack, the atmosphere of society at Havre was rosy with hope. Any day the Huguenot colony confidently expected

to hear Coligny's bugles sounding his entry, at the head of his renowned Gascon chivalry, to join forces with Montgommerie. Then the army would take the field, hurl Guise back upon Paris, hold the capital beleaguered, and raise all provincial France for "the Cause."

Such was the talk in many a circle. In more than one of these Rossignol and Étienne were welcome guests. To the younger man this association was illumining. It opened new and wider views of life. He saw men and women of the old noblesse; soldiers of fortune and soldiers of policy, occasionally a soldier of conscience; grave men of the long robe; English officers, sometimes a fair Englishwoman.

Suddenly came a crushing blow. A haggard rider, bespattered with mud, tumbled from his panting horse in the market-place. While the poor beast tottered, with heaving flanks and drooping head, he gasped out, "The Admiral beaten! — Condé taken! — The army routed!"

Guise had thrown himself, with a mighty army of royalists and Spanish veterans, athwart the path of Coligny and Condé marching northward. There was no choice but to fight. In vain the light Southern horse had flung itself against the solid wall of Spanish pikemen, three ranks deep. They strewed the plain of Dreux with their dead, and the first great battlefield of the Religious Wars saw the impetuous charges of the Gascon chivalry turned into panic. Coligny, with the shattered remnant, would be fortunate if he could make good his retreat to the South, leaving Condé a prisoner.

A breathless crowd quickly gathered around the messenger. His story seemed incredible. But other fugitives soon confirmed it. Then gloom and dismay, proportioned to their former exaltation, fell upon the Huguenots, cut off from their compatriots in the South and shut in between the victorious enemy and the deep sea. The hopes of the cause, they said, were drowned in blood.

So it was that Rossignol and Étienne now strolled along the quays, drawn to the waterside by a vague feeling that the only future for Protestant Frenchmen lay over seas. But where? And how?

They came to a small craft evidently fitting for a voyage. They stopped and watched the work curiously. Every venture over the water interested them. While they looked on two men came out from the cabin in the high poop. One was Montgommerie; the other, a bronzed, sailor-looking man, with a sturdy frame, a strong face, and a masterful eye.

Montgommerie, taking leave of him, said, "Oh! if I were a young fellow, how gladly I should sail with you! How long a voyage is it?"

"Two months, if all goes well; three or more, if we meet head winds."

Rossignol and Étienne looked quickly at each other, their eyes kindling with a common thought. Without a word, by the same impulse they stepped on board and met the two men at the gang-plank.

"Ha, my Castor and Pollux! My twin warriors!" cried Montgommerie. "Here, Captain Ribaut, are two soldiers who, I warrant you, should they turn sailors, would drive Neptune himself off the deep."

Then he briefly told the story of their heroic entry into Rouen. They did not interrupt him. It served their purpose well to be thus commended. This good office done, he went his way.

"Will you walk in, Gentlemen?" said Ribaut, seeing that the newcomers lingered, and opened the door of a little, dark cabin, faintly lighted by a hanging lamp, beneath which lay an open chart.

"May we ask, what is this intended voyage?" said Rossignol.

"It is not matter of common knowledge," Ribaut answered, "for we must needs keep our plans secret. We would not have a whisper of them carried to Spain. But to such friends of the cause as you, I may talk freely. I sail for Florida."

Florida! that land of enchantment beyond the Western Ocean, untrodden as yet by foot of Frenchmen, and still for them, not knowing the story of luckless Coronado and ill-fated Soto, a land of mysterious spendor, where El Dorado, the Gilded King, sat-on his jeweled throne, and the Seven Gities of Cibola reared their many-storied palaces, and the gold mines of Apalachee invited the daring explorer. A voyage to Florida! To Frenchmen of that time it was as if one should say, "Come, step aboard, my hearties! Sinbad the Sailor steers."

The North, indeed, was known to Frenchmen. Breton and Norman and Basque fishermen frequented the shores of Newfoundland. But the balmy South, land of gold and pearls and spices, as yet was all Spain's own, watched with jealous eye.

It was, however, no wonder-seeking, treasure-

hunting expedition, that Ribaut purposed, but a practical undertaking, worthy of the great mind that conceived it; nothing else than to plant on the shores of the New World a colony that should be a haven of refuge for the persecuted Huguenots. Amid its scented forests a New France was to arise, in which the white banner of the Valois should be the emblem of peace, not of tyranny and bloodshed. Happily, this dream had come to Coligny while he still was the trusted counselor of the Crown, and as Admiral of France he had given his commission to Ribaut, with funds for the expedition, before the outbreak of the Civil War. Now the recent disaster amply justified his foresight.

All this jumped with our friends' thought. As Ribaut talked they saw a fair vision of New France, as Coligny had dreamed it, and their hearts glowed with the hope of a happy, godly community beyond the seas, peaceful and prosperous. They eagerly asked a place in the expedition. Ribaut hesitated: of gentlemen and soldiers he had enough. He needed only an artisan or two.

"A smith and armorer, for example?" asked Rossignol.

"Precisely."

"See my workmanship!" and he flashed out Frédégonde.

Ribaut grasped the mighty weapon by the hilt, felt its weight, wondered at its length and its nice balance, glanced along the keen blade, felt its edge, tried its temper, admired the delicate damascening — all with the air of a master — then handed it back, saying, "A sword for a paladin!"

No other argument was needed. From that moment Rossignol was armorer of the expedition. But there was a question as to Étienne, he looked so young. Rossignol answered quickly, "You will find few men of twice his years better than he. Besides, I need a helper at the forge." That settled it; Étienne was accepted.

Then the two men walked briskly away to tell the tidings to the Marcels. As, with eager and flushed faces they entered the room where the ladies sat, an instant ray of hope lighted the women's hearts.

"What good news do you bring us?" said Madame Marcel, brightly.

"The best imaginable," Rossignol cried. "What would you say to a peaceful home over the seas, beyond the reach of tyranny and persecution?"

Perplexity overspread the hearers' faces. "Where?" asked one doubtfully.

Then Rossignol briefly detailed the plan. As he spoke a cloud gathered on the women's faces. Madeleine looked grave. Marguerite turned pale, and her lip quivered.

At the first pause old Madame Montcorbier, seated stiff and grim in her straight, high-backed chair, flung out, her little black eyes dancing with ill-suppressed anger, "Simpletons! Who talks of taking my nieces to a land of wild beasts and cannibals?"

"But, Madame," Étienne broke in eagerly, "surely you mistake. It is on record that one Giovanni Verrazano, whom King Francis sent out, found the people of that country singularly mild and gentle."

The old lady shook her head peevishly, darting an

angry look at him. Before she could find words Madame Marcel, anxious to mediate, said, "Ah, my child, men may go. For them there is the attraction of adventure. But few women, I fear, will be found willing to leave home and kindred for such an experiment. We are strong and patient in suffering, and we would fain bear the evils we know, rather than rush into others that we know not of."

In vain Étienne descanted eloquently on the glowing picture his fancy painted. He convinced nobody. Marguerite indeed followed him with hopeful look. But when he had finished the light died in her eyes.

"It is a mad scheme," Madame Montcorbier blurted out.

"A fond dream!" was clearly the other women's deliberate judgment, and the men went away disconcerted, but not in the least shaken in their purpose.

Étienne was influenced more than he was aware by a certain motive of which he did not breathe a syllable to Rossignol. Every day he felt Marguerite's attraction for him growing stronger, and he took shame to himself that the thought of Félicie was becoming almost repugnant. So ingrained in him was the notion that he was to marry her, that it seemed part of the duty he owed to his father; to entertain the idea of anything else would be disloyalty. He had never mentioned her to the Marcels. Had he spoken of her at the beginning, the situation would have been different. Now he shrank from it. Meanwhile Marguerite's girlish beauty, her charm of manner, her innocent freedom, and her undisguised fond-

ness for him were weaving about him a spell which he could not break.

Now, thank Heaven! an opportunity had come for deliverance from a situation that was growing more and more perilous. Away from the fascination of Marguerite's presence he would regain his self-poise.

Rossignol had heard from Étienne of Félicie and of the family convention. He had watched the play of youthful feeling between Marguerite and his young comrade, and had divined the struggle in Étienne's mind. Now he half surmised what the other felt as to going away.

On the day of sailing, our voyagers saw for the first time the whole company assembled. With keen disappointment Étienne noted its make-up. There were blustering soldiers, of the hireling sort, and rough sailors, half-pirates. But where were the serious, godly men of "the Religion?" Only a sober artisan or two represented that class.

Last of all swaggered on board a knot of young nobles, whom Ribaut met, uncovered, at the gangplank. The sight sent a chill to Étienne's heart. Was the expedition about to carry to the New World the same fatal weakness that doomed it in the Old, the preponderating influence of men who had no heart in the cause, Huguenots from policy, revolutionists from self-interest?

While he watched the roystering group, who quickly took possession of the poop-deck, a tall, dark man turned toward him, and with something like a shiver he recognized him.

Bertrand de Briancourt came of an old stock whose

ancient seat was not far from Étienne's native village of Lourdes. But the family had fallen, forsooth, on evil times. Bertrand's father, Enguerrand, in the heyday of youth, as a favored courtier of Francis the First, had equipped a troop and followed his gaillard master to the war in Italy, where he shared the disaster of Pavia. When the captive monarch returned from his imprisonment at Madrid, Enguerrand, far from receiving the reward which he conceived to be due to his services, found himself, through some mysterious feminine influence, — spretae injuria formæ — fallen from royal grace. Every effort to regain his old footing proved futile; the reigning sultana was against him.

Retiring to his estate of Briancourt, he sulked through the remainder of that reign, in the fond hope that a new monarch would recognize his deserts. Alas! under Henry, Diana and the Guises still shut off the sunlight and left him shivering in the cold, a sour and aging man. The day when Montgommerie's too well-aimed lance laid low the royal lover in the lists at Vincennes found him hopelessly broken and embittered. Behold a new monarch, and the Guises mightier than ever, through the influence of their niece on the throne, destined to a lurid career as the Queen of Scots. What remained to the poor, discredited old courtier but the eternal refuge of discontent, revolution? In France at that day it masqueraded as religion. Forthwith Enguerrand de Briancourt, from pique and policy, without even a decent pretense of pious motive, avowed himself a supporter of the new opinions, dismantled a chapel on his estate,

drove away the priest, and proscribed the old faith under dire penalties. Come what might of the new, it had for him one commanding merit: it stood for hostility to the Guises.

By this chain of circumstances Bertrand de Briancourt found himself, in young manhood, heir to a vast legacy of wounded pride and bitter hate — and little else, for the already encumbered estate of his fathers had been racked to the last groat to equip an older brother for a brilliant alliance, — committed, moreover, to the weaker side in the bloody struggle whose preliminary throes began to shake the land. The outbreak of actual warfare gave him a welcome opportunity. As an officer under the atrocious Des Adrets, whose fiendish barbarities successfully rivaled those of the Catholic captain, Blaise de Montluc, he won renown as a daring partizan leader and a lieutenant worthy of his infamous chief.

The crushing disasters at Rouen and at Dreux had turned his eyes, as those of many others, to the New World, the mysterious region whence the cavaliers of Spain were wont to bring home princely wealth, as a quarter where they might hope to repair their broken fortunes.

Now, standing on the deck of Ribaut's little ship, surrounded by admiring comrades, mostly younger, he was the very type of the gentleman adventurer. Tall, dark, sinewy, with aquiline features, the eye of a hawk, and a curling moustache under which his teeth gleamed wolfishly when his lips parted, at times, in a peculiar cynical smile, he wore his frayed and weather-stained garments, which were graced with

huge lace ruffles covering his hands, and his slouched hat, looped and plumed, set rakishly on his clustering jet-black curls, with the mingled hauteur of a grand seigneur and the sang froid of a seasoned soldier.

With this formidable personage Étienne never in his life had exchanged a word. Still he felt towards him a strong instinctive aversion, partly the reflection of his father's stern disapproval of the Briancourt family, who stood, in his eyes, for all that was worst in political Huguenotry, and still more because, in some indefinable way, he associated him disagreeably with Félicie.

Once, as he stood talking with her at her gate, with his back to the road, she suddenly stammered, flushed, and dropped her eyes. Wheeling to ascertain the cause of this agitation, he saw the young Sieur de Briancourt, fresh from bloody deeds in Dauphiné, sauntering by, with his leisurely swagger, and caught the vanishing remnant of a knowing leer that quickly changed into a contemptuous scowl, as their eyes met. Why the passing of this ill-famed swash-buckler should so move his companion was a mystery to Étienne. Félicie did not offer any explanation, and he was either too reserved or too proud to ask one.

The incident, trivial enough, left an impression which had gradually faded, but was now revived with singular force by the sight of this man standing among his disorderly comrades, all evidently purposing to take part in a venture which, for Étienne, carried precious hopes of a sacred cause.

The recognition evidently was mutual, and equally

mutual the dislike. Étienne, the next moment, flushing hotly, found himself stared at by the whole group, which had turned, tittering, towards him and was surveying him with undisguised contemptuous mirth. He gave them back an angry look, whereupon their hilarity was redoubled. Just then Rossignol, coming to his side, took in the situation in an instant. Shooting from his great, gray eyes a withering glance that had a visibly sobering effect on the arrogant aristocrats, he took Étienne by the arm and led him away.

As the two little vessels bore out of the harbor, three tearful women watched them from a hill-top, then walked slowly away, silent and dejected, to take up woman's eternal work of patient waiting.

PART II

CHAPTER VIII

THE FLEURS-DE-LIS IN FLORIDA

In the merry month of May, on a smiling morning when the breeze off shore was fragrant as the scent of a rose-garden, Captain Jean Ribaut's two little vessels coasted a region called by the natives Chicora, a part of the vast territory, extending to Nova Scotia, put down on the maps of the day as Florida. They had made their landfall about the mouth of the St. John's and then had turned northward.

After three months on the wintry Atlantic, what a world of enchantment! Sailing its shores and exploring its inlets, they breathed an air milder than any they had ever known and admired a wealth of verdure such as they had never dreamed of. The waters, wherever they went, teemed with fish. When they landed, the palmetto, with its sheathed bole and

rustling fronds, the stately magnolia, the gray moss, trailing silvery pendants in the breeze, filled them with wonder. Wide savannas spangled with flowers wooed them. Here were unfrightened deer standing a moment at gaze, then bounding easily away through the forest-glades. Great flocks of curlews flew overhead, with shrill cry. Thousands of waterfowl waded the shallows. In the woods the bronzed turkey-cock, strutting proudly before his admiring seraglio, trumpeted his sonorous challenge to all rivals far and near. By night the forest was vocal with the whippoorwill's plaintive wail and flashed with the light of myriad fire-flies.

Everywhere was life, abundant, exuberant, joyous. And everywhere was a glad welcome. The generous natives either had forgotten their cruel experience of white men, nearly forty years earlier, or found the Frenchmen different from Spaniards. They overwhelmed them with kindness, feasted them, stood by in respectful silence while they worshiped under the trees, and loaded their boats with the finest fish from the weirs.

Now the voyagers sighted Cape Saint Helena, so named by the Spanish kidnapper, Ayllon, whose keel, first cut these tranquil waters. Hilton Head we moderns call it. Passing between it and the opposite headland, they sailed into a noble estuary, "so broad and deep that the greatest ships of France, yea, the Argosies of Venice may enter in there," Laudonnière wrote in his journal. A kingly haven it was, and Port Royal they named it.

Over the wide waters brooded deep calm, with no

sign of life but leaping fish, a flock of heavy-winged gulls, and an osprey circling high against the blue dome of heaven. No presage of the roar of disastrous battle which, three hundred years later, awakened the echoes of the silent shores!

Up the shining haven the little ships sped, to right of them and to left of them serried ranks of stately pines crowding to the water's edge, not a sound but the ripple under their bows and exclamations of delight from the voyagers crowding the sides. Their course led them up a wide waterway, named by them La Grande, which we have turned into "Broad River." Then they steered to the right into another ample stream and, having ascended it some miles, with glorious wooded shores on either hand, and sometimes, between great stretches of marsh, of a vivid, velvety green, they came to anchor within the mouth of a creek, before a low bluff crowned with a growth of Druidic live-oaks.

The spot seemed favorable to their purpose. They landed, explored it, and found their first judgment confirmed. It was a noble site. Not far from it stands to-day picturesque old Beaufort, faded home of by-gone beauty and chivalry. There, beneath the stately trees waving their ancient boughs, in the solemn woodland aisles, where banners of silver-gray moss trailed their dim glory, the explorers unfurled their flag, took possession for their God and their king, and, in the name of the effete France of the Valois, with fond hopes planned a new France.

Man and nature seemed alike propitious; and everybody was full of hopes, each according to the bent of

his mind. A pious few dreamed of a shining City of God, but the most pictured an empire whose yield in gold would rival the hoards which Spain wrung from Mexico and Peru.

Now Ribaut had found a spot suitable for a colony, and he was ready to sail home. But many were reluctant to return empty-handed. "We have but touched the shores of El Dorado," they said. "Give us a lodgment here, and we shall win an empire for France and wealth for ourselves."

Ribaut thought well of their proposal. They might stay and hold the place till his proposed colony should come, a few months at the most. He decided to leave a band of thirty and appointed Albert de Pierria, a stern soldier, to the command.

A fort was built, armed with cannon taken from the ships, scantily provisioned from their stores, and named in honor of the reigning king, Charles Fort. It stood in a little cleared space on a low point washed on one side by the bold tributary which the newcomers called the Chenonceau, and bounded on the other by a marsh stretching down to Broad River, some two hundred yards away. Thus its guns commanded both streams, and the sentry on the rampart would have a wide outlook over the splendid waterway, which, it was expected, would shortly begin to whiten with the sails of treasure-ships. Back of the fort, beneath the sparse shade of tall pines, only the underbrush having been chopped away, stood the men's huts, in two rows, with the commander's cabin a little retired and facing the street. Still further back, the ground sloped gently upward to a majestic

oak grove fronting the Chenonceau on the crest of a sandy bluff.

What should Étienne do? He inclined to stay. When he learned from Rossignol that he contemplated remaining, his decision was made.

As the vessels hoisted their canvas, saluted the flag, then bore away out of the Chenonceau and down Broad River, he stood watching with a heavy heart the sails growing ever smaller. They were going home! Then he turned away with a sense of loneliness. He had remained because he thought it right, not because he anticipated any pleasure in it. Two things disturbed him. The more serious men of the expedition, almost to a man, had gone home. His companions at the fort would be chiefly a wild set.

But what he felt most deeply was that his relations with Rossignol were no longer so close as in the days when they two were alone together. This was natural enough. Rossignol had many other ties and interests. On the voyage he had quickly become an immense favorite with the whole company, gentle and simple. He organized fun; he arranged games and revels; and his voice and lute, his stories and songs, were an inexhaustible resource. So popular was he that, had Ribaut consulted the wishes of the company in the choice of a commander for Charles Fort, the general cry would have been for Rossignol. Well would it have been for all concerned! Unhappily, Rossignol was but a simple soldier, and the honor of France demanded a noble for the post. So it was given to Pierria, a gentle-born martinet.

With Rossignol in command, Étienne would have

been at his ease. Now he reflected with concern that the wild fellows who formed the bulk of the company were less likely to be influenced by Rossignol than by one of their own type. Indeed, from the hour that the vessels sailed Briancourt seemed to be fast gaining the ascendancy. The clique of which he was the leader had never given Étienne anything but cold looks and sneers. Now that the restraining influence of the better-minded majority was withdrawn they became more aggressive in their hostility and treated him with studied insolence.

His forebodings were soon realized. The men's incorrigible tendencies quickly broke out. The last thing that any one thought of was such toil as might derive subsistence from the earth. The soldiers and sailors were professional rovers, and the gentlemen, forsooth, held labor beneath them. Gold was the one common thought. No one doubted that they were within easy distance of kingdoms rich in treasure. Who had not heard tales of Balboa's men staggering to the coast laden with gold? Why should not they fare as well? Why waste their time in menial labor, when golden Apalachee, perchance the kingdom of El Dorado, was to be conquered and despoiled? Almost the whole company threw themselves into a reckless mode of life, feverishly chasing the phantom, gold. Every day they grew more disorderly, more insolent, more defiant of discipline.

Ribaut's parting injunction that the Indians should be treated kindly was more than literally obeyed. The Frenchmen abandoned themselves to an unbounded freedom of intercourse with them. Only their

fire-arms kept the natives in awe, when the strangers were seen to be, for the greater part, greedy, dissolute vagabonds, who would not or could not even hunt and fish.

Every dream that had moved Étienne to remain in Florida quickly vanished. If this reign of folly and license should last without bringing on some catastrophe until the return of Ribaut with a band of colonists, it was the utmost that he could hope.

Meanwhile he improved his abundant leisure in gaining a little woodcraft and learning to handle a canoe. Often the setting sun found him floating tranquilly, miles away from the fort, drinking in the beauty about him, the gorgeous clouds of purple and gold, the darkening shores, the homeward-bound flights of birds, the holy stillness. As he paddled back, amid the falling shadows, he took heart, seeing star after star quivering in the rippling water.

In vain Pierria tried to check his men, warning them of the evils they were drawing on their own heads. Unhappily, destitute of tact, he knew no way of ruling his men but by the strong hand.

They had roamed the forests, they had followed the creeks far inland. Nowhere had they found a sign of silver or gold. A few pearls had only whetted their greed. Then they demanded to be led into the interior.

"Let us march to Apalachee!" they cried.

"In four years' search did Soto find gold?" Pierria replied, and he steadily refused to be moved.

Disgust and discontent were aggravated by the fierce heat of midsummer. The gifts of the natives

grew rarer and more meagre. Starvation stared the Frenchmen in the face.

"Ah! this accursed country of savages!" they cried. "These glassy waters shimmering in the heat! These voiceless woods! This brazen sky!" They were in a mood for any reckless deed that would bring a change.

All the while Rossignol was doing his utmost to check the growing discontent. Apparently, he never knew an hour of depression. His cheer was inexhaustible. During the sultry heat his merry song rang out over the silent post. When there was work to be done, his lusty blows on the anvil made music to his jocund song. Sometimes he played practical jokes on one or another of his comrades. His popularity and a wholesome fear of his brawny arm gave him impunity in these little ventures.

All the day he was a jolly companion, a busy fellow, full of work, of energy, of exuberant spirits. When evening came, his mood changed. He was an inspired bard. Sitting in the cool dusk, with the men grouped about him on the bluff, the water lapping gently below, the breeze softly stirring the boughs overhead and swaying the ghostly pendants of silver-gray moss, he was transported to other lands and times. He touched his lute musingly a moment or two. Then his luminous eyes kindled with a far-away look, and he sang, in his deep voice, a rondel of old Brittany, a romance of troubadour days, or a ballad of gay Provence.

Sometimes he improvised. His hearers never knew any difference. They only knew that his song had

magic to drive away dull care, to soothe the aching of the spirit yearning for home, and to conjure up, in lieu of their savage environment, bright worlds of the imagination peopled with the shining children of his fancy.

CHAPTER IX

PIERRIA SETS THE SPARK

ONE day a party of men roaming the woods for food and adventure came, near evening, to an Indian village. A solemn religious festival was to the fore. The natives welcomed the strangers and fed them. Then the chief, intimating by signs that their eyes might not look upon the great mysteries, shut them up in his wigwam. One Guernache, the drummer, however, contrived to slip out and hide himself where he might observe the proceedings. First came the medicine-men, in great state, and seated themselves in a circle. Then the warriors, bedaubed and be-feathered, filed in and took their places in rows around the sorcerers. Next came the young men in a body, all hideous in paint, and began a slow rhythmic movement, to lugubrious howling and the beating of drums, around the circle of older braves. Gradually the movement quickened, the yelling waxed louder and more piercing, the drumming more furious.

Suddenly there burst from the darkness a band of young women, their bodies painted, some wholly white, some wholly black, others in divers colors, in rings or in streaks, and each one's head surmounted by a pair of antlers. These grotesque bacchantes, with shrill cries, high leaps, and wild antics, began

to move in a swift whirl around the circle of young men, in the opposite direction.

The outer circumference was held by a fringe of grizzled hags. These fierce, hollow-eyed mænads, their shriveled bodies covered with tattered rags of filthy buckskin, heightened the general frenzy by demoniac yells and by gashing the limbs of the girls, as they whirled past in the Bacchic orgy, with sharp mussel-shells. Each successful thrust, followed by starting blood, drew a chorus of yells from the beldams.

When the devilish uproar was at its height, suddenly a squaw rushed in from the outer darkness with horror depicted in her face, shouting and throwing up her hands to arrest the dance. All stopped, listening. She poured out her story and pointed to the belt of trees from which she had just emerged. In an instant the whole band of women rushed to the spot with frantic yells. They quickly returned, dragging the affrighted Guernache into the light.

In the hands of the ferocious hags he would have received short shrift. Already they were throwing themselves upon him with savage cries, armed with their keen mussel-shells, when some of the older men rushed to the rescue. They had much ado to shield him from violence. Indeed he had already received gashes in the face and hands, from which the blood flowed freely. His protectors urged the danger of provoking the palefaces and the wisdom of postponing vengeance.

There was a brief lull. The elders took advantage of it to release the Frenchmen and bid them begone

with all haste. This they were not slow to do. Along with Guernache, they made their way quickly to the fort, not knowing at what moment they might be overtaken by a band of infuriated savages. In the dark woods, at night, they would have been at a frightful disadvantage. They reached the fort in safety, however, and stole silently to their huts.

The next morning, betimes, a deputation of the older warriors solemnly waited on Pierria and with expressive pantomime told their story. The stern soldier was highly incensed. He ordered out the garrison. The men were drawn up on the parade in a single rank, without arms. A guard stood by, with matches lighted, under the lieutenant, Nicholas Barré.

Pierria took his place in front of the sullen line and beckoned the Indians to come forward and designate the offender. Without hesitation they all pointed out Guernache. The gashes on his hands and face confirmed the charge.

"Stand forward, sirrah!" Pierria commanded sternly.

The fellow took a sullen step to the front.

"What have you to say for yourself?" Pierria demanded.

The offender stole a glance to the right and left along the line, read sympathy in almost every face, then cast a defiant look at his superior and stood obstinately silent.

Mutiny was in the air, and Pierria was not the man to temporize. He ordered the prisoner bound. It was done by the guard. Then he ordered him hanged.

Not a hand moved, and a murmur of disapproval ran along the line. Undeterred, Pierria performed the gruesome task himself, amid jeers and hisses. Then he cashiered his lieutenant on the spot and contemptuously dismissed the men.

CHAPTER X

NOBLESSE OBLIGE

THE rest of that day seemed to Étienne a nightmare. A horrible shadow overbrooded everything. Turn his eyes whither he would, they always came back to the ghastly figure of the dead drummer hanging between the huts.

There was utter stillness about the place: no sound of laughter, no song; the sentry paced the rampart sullen and gloomy; only the gleaming waters, the fiery heavens, the everlasting silence, and now and then the petulant scream of a blue-jay or the monotonous tap-tapping of a woodpecker. The men slunk from hut to hut, casting sidelong glances at the gruesome Thing hanging near, and talked in stealthy knots under their breath.

With night came only a deeper gloom. One might almost feel in the air the gathering of a storm. Étienne threw himself down in his hut — he was alone, for Rossignol was on guard duty — and fell into a light sleep. A cry aroused him. In an instant he was on his feet. It was but the sentry's challenge. At another time he would have slept on unheeding. He settled himself again, but slumber would not visit him. He lay yearning for home and friends, panting in the sultry, breathless gloom.

Hist! what was that? There was a low murmur in the hut next his. He crept to his door and looked out. Now and again shadowy forms moved stealthily back and forth. The whole camp was furtively astir. Only about the captain's hut, a little apart, there was no movement but that of the sentry pacing before the door. What should he do? He could think of nothing but to wait and watch. He lay in the doorway, with eye and ear intent, his arms at hand. At last he fell into a doze.

Suddenly a sharp cry pierced the night, followed by a clamor of voices and the clash of arms.

"Die, murderer!" was shouted from a dozen throats.

"Back, villains!" came the prompt answer.

Étienne rushed to the spot. Pierria, with his back to his hut, was defending himself against a ring of assailants pressing furiously upon him. Étienne had unsheathed his sword as he ran. With a cry he threw himself upon the mutineers. One of them turned upon him savagley. In the dim light he recognized Bertrand de Briancourt, tall and sinewy, his lips parted, his teeth gleaming wolfishly.

The disparity was fearful. On one side, a seasoned and skilful swordsman; on the other, a raw youth. Still Étienne made a brave fight. Parrying, leaping from side to side, and backing to avoid his opponent's savage onset, he was driven under a tree. In another moment there was a sharp wrench of his wrist, his sword went flying in the branches, and the point of his adversary's blade at his breast held him pinned against the trunk.

"Now, insolent whelp, I shall spit you. But first —"

"Oh, come, comrade! That is enough. Leave the boy!" broke in Rossignol's deep voice, as he clasped Briancourt in his brawny arms, swung him around, and threw himself between him and his intended victim.

All the others ran to the spot, for Pierria had fallen, and there was a hubbub of voices

"Stick the chicken-livered whelp!" cried one.

"Stop his damned psalm-singing breath, I say, as poor Guernache's was stopped," clamored another.

"Nothing of the kind," said Rossignol, stoutly. "What has he done? No crime, surely. Only fought for his commander, and made an uncommonly plucky fight, too. Nobody shall hurt him while I live."

It was evident, however, that a majority favored killing him on the spot. But Rossignol stood by him valiantly, backed by the more moderate men, and they finally succeeded in shielding him from immediate violence. So soon as they could they slipped him away to his hut, where one of their number guarded him, arquebuse in hand.

There he lay on the ground the remainder of the still, hot night, while his fate was debated, himself sullenly resigned to whatever might betide him.

The sun was rising when Rossignol came to him with food. "My boy," he said, "you have had a narrow escape, but we've pulled you through. You have a chance for your life."

To Étienne it was a matter of indifference. What was life amid such surroundings that he should care for it? He sat stolidly awaiting his fate, when Rossignol, with four sailors, came to him and bade him

accompany them. He followed them to the waterside. They motioned him to a seat in the bow of the boat and the men began to row. After a while a breeze sprang up and they hoisted a sail.

The men were sullen and mostly silent, but from their desultory remarks Étienne gathered that there had been a conflict, and that the more moderate party had only consented to join with the violent majority on the condition of Barré's being chosen captain. Rossignol, it seemed, had brought about this result, and Étienne conjectured that his own sentence was included in the same compromise.

They came into wider waters, and the breeze freshened. At the end of two or three hours, after sailing across a broad sound, they landed on a beach, and Rossignol sprang out and led him ashore. In doing so, he leaned close to him and whispered, "Farewell, poor boy! This is the best I can do for you now," thrusting something into the bosom of Étienne's doublet. "But have no fear, I shall come for you."

Then he sprang aboard, and the boat was pushed off.

CHAPTER XI

ROSSIGNOL AS A DIPLOMAT

For two days after his return to Charles Fort Rossignol busied himself with his wonted tasks. Once more his hammer rang merrily on the anvil, beating time to his song. Meanwhile Briancourt and his intimates blustered about in high feather. Apalachee was all their talk.

On the evening of the second day the drum summoned the men to a meeting. What was to the fore? Nobody seemed to know. The men seated themselves Indian fashion, on the ground, in the street between the cabins, and awaited what would come.

"This meeting has been called at the request of several of our number," Barré announced. "Has any one business to lay before it?"

There was a moment's hush. Then Rossignol slowly rose and said, "I propose that we reconsider the vote by which Étienne Cazenove has been banished."

A laugh of derision greeted this opening. The speaker looked quietly about him, waiting for silence, then resumed his remarks.

"Comrades," he said, "you remember that the other night, after our late commander was killed, we moderate men consented to act with the rest

only on the condition of our uniting under a leader whom we should name. We are soldiers, and we would have no red-handed murderer for our captain —"

"Take care how you talk!" flung out Briancourt, looking very black. He had not forgiven Rossignol for thwarting his design of succeeding Pierria.

"I am wont to call things by their names," quietly retorted the speaker. He resumed, "Then came the question of young Cazenove. Some of you demanded his life. We called for his release, because he had done no wrong. Finally the matter was settled on the basis of his banishment. Yes, shame on us! we did that cowardly thing."

The speaker had repressed every sign of feeling. Now he let himself go. "To bribe ruffians," he cried, casting a scathing glance upon Briancourt and his satellites, "we have made that brave young fellow our scapegoat. For what crime? Because he proved himself a truer man than any of us. How long has it been criminal in a soldier to stand by his officer? Shame on us! But, thank God! it is not too late. I demand a vote rescinding our sentence and restoring him to his full rights. Comrades, vote like men!"

When Rossignol ceased, there was a moment's breathless hush. Then Briancourt rose, with studied nonchalance, and looked about him smiling sardonically.

"It passes my comprehension," he said with a drawl, "for what purpose we have been called here. This matter was disposed of in a way supposed to be satisfactory to all. We had decided that the presence of a certain young viper was no longer to be

endured. Once I had it in my power to put him out of existence. But I yielded to my good friend there"— a sarcastic bow and smile toward Rossignol, who sat like a statue — "and spared him. Again, when it was proposed to send him after his master, we, the greater number, set aside our better judgment to satisfy our friend there" — another bow to Rossignol. "Is it reasonable in him now to ask still more? Does he imagine that we have changed our minds? Does he fancy he can twist us about his thumb? Let him beware. If he insists on reopening this matter, what will he say if we demand the death-sentence?"

Then, with a dark glance at Rossignol, he sat down. All eyes were turned to the armorer. Not a sound escaped him. He sat serene and placid. Nobody else offered to speak, and there were cries of "A vote!" "A vote!"

"You are to give your votes in order, as your names are called," Barré announced, "on the question of rescinding the sentence of banishment passed on Étienne Cazenove. Answer 'Aye' or 'No' to your names." Therewith he began slowly to call the roll.

The first two men voted as was expected of them. Adrien Chanteloup's name was third. He had always acted with the malcontents. "Aye," he stammered. Briancourt started from his easy posture and shot an angry look at him. The countenances of his intimates suddenly clouded. Was some mischief brewing?

The roll-call went on. Another defection followed, and the faces of the violent faction grew blacker. The third was that of Raoul La Chère, who was, Étienne excepted, the youngest in the force. He was

a bright, boyish fellow of fine impulses, who had been caught by the glitter of Briancourt's manner and had joined his following. When he sang out boldly, in his clear young voice, "Aye," his quondam leader darted a furious glance at him, and wrathful mutterings went around the gang.

The situation looked threatening. The votes were tied. So the ballots continued till the last two names were reached. Of these the one was a known malcontent, the other a moderate. Both voted "Aye." The "Ayes" had won!

"Sacré Dieu!" Briancourt burst out, in a rage.

"Fraud!" "Treachery!" cried his henchmen in chorus.

"Silence!" shouted Barré. "It is a fair vote. Let no one dispute it. Silence, I say!" Therewith he pounded the earth with his sword till it rattled in its scabbard.

When order had been restored, he announced, "I herewith declare the sentence against Étienne Cazenove annulled and him restored —"

"We will not stand it!" cried one, amid a general burst of rage from the defeated party.

"Take care, fellow!" said Barré, shaking his finger at the speaker. "The first man that shows a sign of mutiny will have me to reckon with."

The malcontents dared not try conclusions with the stout soldier, backed by the new majority, and they subsided into sullen silence.

"Let Rossignol," continued Barré, "as speedily as possible, take a boat's crew of his own choosing, and bring back young Cazenove."

A rousing cheer from the moderates drowned the hisses of the defeated.

It was a splendid victory. It meant not only deliverance for Étienne, but salvation for the whole command, in the passing of the popular leadership from Briancourt to Rossignol.

Patience and diplomacy had won the day. Rossignol had returned from the island with a steadfast purpose in his mind. His impenetrable demeanor had averted suspicion. While he hammered on his anvil he beat his plans into shape, and, singing his wonted chansons and ballads, lulled the enemy into security. While his rival blustered about marching to Apalachee the astute armorer was assiduously at work. He conned the majority, picked out those who were most amenable to reason, labored with them in secret, and won them to his side.

CHAPTER XII

A MYSTERY

"Peuple debout! Chante ta dêliverance.
Noël! Noël! Voici le Redempteur!"

a voice caroled lustily through the camp, at early dawn, the morning after the meeting that voted Étienne's recall.

"Damned idiot! Must he disturb everybody's sleep because he is going to bring his cub home?" growled Briancourt.

Rossignol's joy was infectious. His supporters rose to see him start, followed him to the landing, cheered him, cheered for Barré, and cheered lustily for Étienne. As the boat shot out from the Chenonceau into Broad River, Rossignol rose in the sternsheets and swung his hat in farewell to his friends, who gave him back a ringing huzza.

Happy fellow! His great heart, brim-full of joy, reveled in the beauty about him, the long, wide, silvery reaches of the great river; the dark pines crowding in dense phalanx to either shore; the faint veil of mist hanging in the distance over the water; the east brightening with the golden hues of the unfolding day; the vast and eloquent silence, broken by naught but the whirring of wings and a single note

dropping now and then from a flight of sea-fowl, high in air, wending its swift way oceanward; the musical rhythm of the rowing and the pearly drops showering from the raised oars; and, suffusing all, the tender mystery of nature's awakening. He fairly poured out his soul in song while his comrades bent blithely to their task and drove the boat swiftly through the glassy water.

At noon the little craft came out upon a broad sound opening into the ocean. Its blue bosom broke into myriad foamy crests before a fresh breeze sweeping in, laden with the keen scent of the sea.

"Huzzah!" cried Rossignol, and his crew answered with a lusty cheer, as the long, low line of the island emerged from the deep. "In with your oars! Hoist the sail, boys," he cried. "I think we can make the island. And do you, Jacques, who are a Breton and a born sailor, come here and take the tiller."

The Breton's experienced hand at the helm, the boat sped merrily over the glad waters, heeling to the breeze and ducking to the swell, the little waves buffeting her, as in sheer fun, and foaming gleefully in her wake. Flights of sea-birds rose in clouds, in mere exuberance of joyous life, from a long, low, snow-white sand-bank, wheeled with more than soldierly precision, now skimming the surface, like a gray veil spread over the water, now rising high like a silvery cloud against the blue sky, then settled down whence they had risen. The air was electric. Merely to live was joy.

Now the island rose steadily into view and the beach became visible, a slender line of white between

the blue water and the dark woods. Rossignol seized his bugle and poured out such a blast as surely never had been heard from mortal lungs since Roland, in the Pass of Roncesvalles, sent forth that trumpet-peal that killed birds in their flight. The sky darkened with flocks of screaming fowl. Startled deer, couched in thickets, sprang from their lairs and stood trembling, with slender heads erect and ears pricked. But no human form appeared.

"He will soon come," said Rossignol, confidently. "Probably he is at the other end of the island."

But when he blew and blew again, and still there was no sign, a shadow came over his face.

The landing made, the party divided itself for search in opposite directions, Rossignol leading one group, with his bugle; the other provided with an arquebuse. These were to be used at regular intervals. Quickly repeated blowing or firing was to be the signal that Étienne was found.

From end to end the beach was scoured. Étienne's recent tracks were plainly visible, but they were confusing, because they led in both directions. When his friends attempted to follow them into the woods, they lost the trail. Where could he be? All the blowing and firing elicited no sign of his existence.

Meanwhile a dark cloud rolled up swiftly from the sea and blackened the sky. The air grew thick, and the ocean, changed to a leaden hue, beat angrily upon the beach. As the storm rushed upon them, the men took refuge in the woods and sheltered themselves as best they might from a torrent of rain. When the tempest had gone by, night was at hand, and the weary

searchers had no resource but to lie down in their wet clothes and sleep where they were.

In the morning the search was renewed, but all in vain. The general opinion was that Étienne was dead, the victim, probably, of some mischance. His friends reluctantly embarked and returned to Charles Fort.

CHAPTER XIII

A SHIP!

ROSSIGNOL returned to the fort only to organize another search-party, and on the second day he started again for the island. With the Breton sailor, Laborde, and a veteran soldier, Leclerc, he took three Indian hunters, on whose sagacity he chiefly relied.

For a long time the party found no sign of man. The heavy rain that had fallen on the night of the former visit had obliterated the tracks then visible, and no new ones had been made. The island was ominously free from a single trace of man's presence.

Evidently[1] the ocean's creation, its surface rolled in billowy ridges, like a sandy sea. From a long central elevation it fell away on both sides into deep hollows, to rise again in numerous spurs and hillocks, the whole covered with a heavy growth of oaks, pines, and palmettoes. Here and there were stretches of lowland, with dense thickets of sea-myrtle fringing shallow ponds where alligators floated lazily, their hideous heads alone visible at a little distance. Once

[1] The island here described lies on the south side of the entrance of St. Helena Sound. It is known on the maps as Hunting Island, but is also spoken of among passing mariners as Johnson's Island, the name being taken from that of a former owner, a gentleman of Beaufort.

and again, as the party forced their way through the undergrowth, deer rose to their feet, looked wonderingly at these strange intruders, then disappeared with easy bounds.

The searchers plodded on, hour after hour, the Indian hunters in the lead, keenly alert, like hounds seeking a lost scent; Laborde and Leclerc following with meaning nods and shakes of the head; Rossignol tramping on in gloomy silence.

Suddenly there was a yell from the Indian on the left. All hastened to him. He stood before a rude shelter built of palmetto fronds. The white men's joy at the discovery was instantly checked by his shaking his head. His keen eyes had noted that not only was the hut empty, but the sandy soil around it showed not a single track. The builder had not visited it since the rain. Étienne had reared the shelter clearly with the intention of remaining. What had led him to abandon it?

"He's been taken away from the island by some of the savages. That's my opinion," said Leclerc. "They have always liked him, and they would not leave him to starve here."

"Impossible!" said Rossignol, gloomily. "At our first visit there was not a track but his. And, as you see, there has not been a man here since the rain, which fell the same night. What do you think, Laborde?"

"It's my belief," said the old sailor, "that he has escaped from the island. My word for it, we shall hear from him yet. Pardi! there's a lot of pluck in that young fellow, for all that he's so quiet. Trust him to do what any man can do."

Rossignol turned a brightening eye to the speaker, but Leclerc laughed derisively. "Escaped alone, indeed! When he had not so much as a canoe! Flown away, perhaps!"

"All right. You mark my words. We shall see him yet," stolidly returned the sailor. "Built a raft, it may be, and floated away. Had not he a hatchet with him?"

"No," answered Rossignol, "only a little hunting-knife, with a blade a few inches long."

"He could not do anything with that," the other assented.

All turned to the Indians. With one accord they shook their heads. Their bewilderment was as great as the white men's.

The general conviction was that, if Étienne had left the island in some wild attempt to reach the mainland, as now seemed probable, he had surely perished.

Rossignol alone retained a faint hope that he had been rescued by friendly Indians and was in hiding somewhere among them. After his return to Charles Fort, he questioned closely every native who visited the post, offering lavish rewards to whoever should bring him tidings of his young friend. Still the mystery remained unsolved. Either the natives knew nothing, or they concealed their knowledge most successfully under a pretense of deep concern.

As days, then weeks, dragged heavily by, Rossignol's heart sank. It must be, he concluded, that Étienne had perished in some rash attempt to escape from his island-prison.

"Heard you ever the like?" said Florimond, one of Briancourt's satellites, to another. "Are we never to hear the end of Rossignol's gloomy muster-roll, his Arthur and Launcelot, his Roland and Oliver, and that damnable refrain, 'Oh, where is the doughty Charlemange?' It is amazing how a fellow that once was the life of the company can be so tedious, with his everlasting saints and apostles, emperors and kings, and his doleful refrain, 'Ask of the passing wind, it knows as much as you.'"

"Sapristi! You are right. If he can't sing something cheerful, why doesn't he keep quiet? In this accursed place, with the blistering sun overhead, and the glassy river, and the infernal jays screeching in the woods, it is all that a poor devil can do to keep from hanging himself, without having his feelings harrowed by such doleful laments as that I heard him singing this morning. It was about fair women. The most of them had gone wrong, it seemed. Lord! How he strung them out! Phryne, and Helen of Troy, and Héloïse, and that queen — what's her name? — that used to drown her cast-off lovers in the Seine, and I don't know how many more. Then he ends with

> 'Tell me, Queen of Heaven, where,
> Oh, where are the snows of yesteryear?'"

Evidently the fever of discontent, too malignant to be cured by the letting of Pierria's blood, was raging again. The exiles were weary to death of their surroundings. The one dream in every mind was to escape from this hated land. In Heaven's name, why did not Ribaut come?

Briancourt, fiercely resenting Rossignol's wresting the leadership from him, made no attempt to conceal his satisfaction in Étienne's fate. Rossignol, on his side, never forgot who was responsible for it. The hostility of the two leaders divided the little company into embittered factions.

Thus matters stood when an incident occurred that gave a new direction to the thoughts of all. Young La Chère, from the time that he broke away from Briancourt's following, devoted himself heart and soul to Rossignol. Now, in this time of the minstrel's great sorrow, the boy clung to him with the hero-worship of a generous young soul. Rossignol found his one solace in this youth's company and amply repaid his devotion. He took him as his assistant at the forge, and the two became inseparable comrades.

One day Rossignol shut himself up in the smithy with La Chère. They were busy with some mysterious piece of work. While the forge glowed and the anvil rang with the sturdy armorer's blows, nobody was allowed to come near. At last their work was done, and the lad went about smiling, full of mystery.

The next morning, at early dawn, he and Rossignol went aboard the boat and passed out of the Chenonceau into Broad River. An hour later the sentry on the parapet yelled madly. "See there!" he cried, pointing to the wide water, as the entire company ran to the spot.

Beyond the low point which separated the Chenonceau from Broad River, without oar or sail the boat was speeding down the stream, the water foaming

under her stem. In the bow stood La Chère holding tight a rope attached to some invisible object in the water below, while Rossignol sat at his ease in the stern. At sight of his comrades on the rampart the lad shouted merrily.

"What the devil have they got?" the astonished landsmen asked of each other.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the Breton sailor. "They are fast to one of those big fish that we sometimes see playing in La Grande.[1] Now we know the mystery that those two men were working on yesterday. Rossignol was forging a harpoon. He must have seen one somewhere and learned how to use it. You see, that is the way they kill whales. He has been everywhere and, for a landsman, knows more about ships and sailor-life than any man living. He's got up this bit of fun for that boy's diversion."

"That man's ingenuity passes all belief," remarked another. "Who but him would have thought of such a thing? I believe, if he wanted to, he could build a ship."

A ship! The word caught in their minds like a spark in dry grass. Why not? Tools they had, and iron, and a forge. What more did they need? Rossignol's great brain could think out a ship as easily as a song. Of timber there was abundance growing about them. Cordage, sails, all the other necessaries ingenuity would find.

With Gallic swiftness the decision was made. When Rossignol and his companion landed, late in the

[1] This sport of killing "devil-fish," was popular in this region up to the time of the Civil War.

afternoon, weary and hungry, but young La Chère jubilant over having tired out and killed the devil-fish, nobody showed more than a languid interest in his story, so much more absorbing was the new theme.

"Rossignol," a half dozen voices cried together, as he came in, "we are going to build a ship! You are to plan it."

The great gray eyes kindled with sudden light. Why not? The thing was possible, and it appealed to him powerfully. Since Étienne's disappearance he longed as much as anybody to leave the country.

All that evening the details were discussed. Faction was forgotten in the all-absorbing topic. Excepting only the two hostile leaders, the company buried their differences.

Early the next morning the work began. Indians coming to the fort were amazed at the sudden change. There were now no men loitering in the shade, sauntering by the shore, or playing childish games. No colony of beavers could have been busier. The woods rang with the blows of those who felled trees. Others labored under Rossignol's direction at the forge, in making spikes and bolts. Still others gathered moss from the trees, to be dried and used for calking the seams. Yet others were busily collecting a huge heap of pine-knots, to be burned to pitch for coating the bottom.

With hope, cheerfulness had succeeded to discontent. Men who yesterday yawned and cursed existence, to-day whistled at their work. A common purpose inspired all. When it came to making sails,

for lack of canvas, gentlemen, soldiers, and sailors cheerfully stripped themselves of their bedding, even of their shirts.

Day by day the work advanced amazingly. The Indians looking on in wonder, and seeing the strange, huge canoe grow under their eyes, caught the enthusiasm and lent a cheerful hand. When cordage was needed they made a store of it from vegetable fibre and brought it to their white brothers.

At last the work was done, and there floated on the waters of the Chenonceau the craziest craft, surely, that ever tempted the vexed Atlantic.

Everything was hurried toward embarkation. It had been given out that there would be great bargains in knives, beads, looking-glasses, and other such precious commodities; and Indians flocked from the surrounding country, both to speed their troublesome guests' departure and to avail themselves of the greatest commercial opportunity of their lives. They brought for barter stores of maize and pumpkins, dried flesh and dried fish, and, of course, got wonderful bargains. Afterwards there was a general leave-taking, with sorry scenes between gay lovers and heart-sore women.

Then the fleurs-de-lis banner was saluted and hauled down. The last man climbed aboard, and, while the red-men looked on in wonder, with uproarious cheers the patchwork sails were hoisted.

Out the Chenonceau the little brigantine made her way, dropped slowly with the tide down Broad River, caught a stronger breeze, and bore away for the ocean. Down the widening stream she glided, the merry

Frenchmen viewing for the last time the picturesque shores, passed the sandy headlands at the mouth, and soon danced on the swell of the Atlantic. Ere long the coast had faded from view, and the voyagers were alone with their joy on the great deep.

CHAPTER XIV

A PAINTED SHIP UPON A PAINTED OCEAN

It was a blazing hot day, and the Frenchmen's crazy little brigantine lay in a dead calm in the Mid-Atlantic, her sails idle and useless, except to afford a little shade to the wretched, famished crew.

Still the calm held. Day after day the tropical sun rose and set, and still the vessel only rolled on the long, smooth swell of the pitiless sea. All around there was not a sign of hope. A fiery-red sun, like an omen of evil, hung in a dome of hot, yellow haze that shut down, a vast bowl of burnished brass, upon a heaving plain stretching around, full-circle, without a sign of life.

On board was dull despair on every face, here and there a gleam of incipient madness. The men, haggard and livid, lay about the deck. Not a sound but the chafing of the yards, as the clumsy craft rolled with the ocean's slow heave and the idle sails of patched shirts swung heavily with the motion.

The famished crew had already eaten their shoes and leather jerkins. The last fearful resource was in all minds. Presently some of the men clustered in the bow began to whisper and cast dark glances towards La Chère, who sat alone amidships, gazing seaward, his arms on the bulwark, his chin on his hands, his thoughts, poor boy! far away.

Rossignol was astern, near Barré. He took note of the wolfish glances cast at La Chère. Suddenly he burst out hoarsely, "What's this hellish scheming there forward? Speak out like men, why don't you? You mean that it must be that one die, lest all die? Eh? Agreed! But there shall be no murder, mark you! The thing must be done decently. What say you all?"

"Agreed!" cried the men forward in chorus. It was food, not murder, they wanted.

La Chère started from his reverie, little dreaming of the fearful fate from which Rossignol had rescued him.

"Let us draw for it," said one.

"How? Those who draw first will have the best chance," objected another.

"Draw for numbers," said Rossignol shortly.

"You arrange it," Barré directed.

A scrap of paper was produced. Rossignol folded and began to tear it into bits. How many should he make? There were eighteen men, besides Barré. He gave a meaning glance at the captain.

Barré understood it. "Make nineteen. I take my chance with the rest," he said.

Rossignol scribbled a number on every scrap, from one to nineteen. "Give me a casque," he said.

One was handed him. He dropped the scraps of paper into it and mixed them up.

"Our captain draws first," he said, holding out the casque. Barré turned his head away, thrust in his hand, and pulled out a paper.

"My number is Five," he announced.

"Now our captain holds the casque for the rest of

us," said Rossignol, delivering to Barré the urn of fate.

One after another, the men came up, turned their backs, and drew, each announcing his number. Number One was held by La Chère. Many an envious glance was cast at him. Number Eighteen had fallen to Rossignol, number Nineteen to Briancourt. They, too, were envied. Most likely they would never need to draw.

The affair was growing critical. The preliminaries had been settled, and the real business was about to begin.

Rossignol commenced to arrange the final drawing. Once more he prepared nineteen ballots. On two of them he wrote a single word. Then he thrust these among the blanks and shuffled all together. All watched him in breathless silence, some with stony faces, others shivering.

Presently he announced, "There are two marked ballots, one for him who shall suffer, the other for him who shall execute our will. Let him who draws first afterwards hold the casque for the rest. Does this meet your approval?"

Barré nodded. Some of the men muttered assent. The rest, too wrought up for speech or sign, set their chattering teeth and shook in silence.

All being ready, Barré commanded, "Number One, approach and draw."

La Chère stepped up, deathly pale, and pulled out a paper.

"Blank!" announced Barré. "Now do you hold the casque, my boy, for the rest of us."

Number Two was drawn, blank! Number Three, blank! Number Four, blank! At the turn of Number Five, Barré averted his head, drew a lot, and held it up for all to see. Still blank!

As the drawing proceeded, the tension grew unbearable. Blank after blank came out. It seemed incredible. Were the ballots bewitched? Or was Rossignol juggling? The men looked from one to another in amazement. Each as he came up felt that he was doomed to break the spell; and still it held.

Number Seventeen had been drawn, and Barré, amazed, had announced a blank. He glanced in wonder at Rossignol. Had he made some curious blunder? Or wrought some magic? The armorer was imperturbable, none in the company less moved than he.

The affair had come to a singular pass, a duel to the death between the two foes, with Fate for umpire. Amid awful silence, breathless, the whole company watched the deadly issue.

The armorer stepped up. His stolid look had given place to a singular smile. La Chère had ill borne the whole ordeal. Now he turned away his head with a shiver, while his trembling hand clutched the casque. Even Barré's nerve almost failed him.

"Number Eighteen, Rossignol! Draw!" he commanded, with a shaking voice.

With an easy, half-mocking smile Rossignol looked into the face of Briancourt hanging over, ashy-pale, his haggard features tense, his teeth gleaming like fangs in his beard of many weeks' growth. He thrust in his hand, took up one of the ballots, glanced at it,

quickly dropped it, and drew forth the other. Only Briancourt, watching like a tiger, noted the exchange.

"Cheat!" he cried, savagely clutching the other's arm.

Smiling scornfully in his foe's livid face, Rossignol held up the lot to Barré, who read it with staring eyes, then sank back into his seat, speechless.

His movement told the fatal issue and was followed by a general groan, while Briancourt hung his head. The natural effect of his exclamation was to put Rossignol in the light of having fraudulently sought to escape death. None believed it. Still none tried to thwart him, so evident had been his purpose from the beginning.

Grief fell on the whole company. By what jugglery had their favorite accomplished this dreadful result? However it had been done, the fact was plain; he was no choice of capricious chance, but deliberately self-doomed. Yet, from his jocund air, one might easily have mistaken him for a favorite of fortune. Only, his eye carefully avoided Briancourt.

"Why so sober, mon capitaine?" he said gaily to Barré, who sat in dumb dejection. "Who could be spared so well as I? You, for example, have wife and children waiting for you by your hearth. Others have the same. These youngsters have all life before them, love waiting to bless them. But what has a withered tree like me to do with life? No bright eyes will weep themselves dim for the hunchback."

Turning to the men, he said louder, "Come, boys, cheer up! What say you to a song? Who will sing?"

Not a man answered. All sat with drooping heads.

Only Briancourt moved uneasily, keeping his eyes turned seaward.

"What? Not a singer among you this bright morning! Then, my faith! I must e'en give you a song myself. The Rossignol [nightingale] must play the swan for once. But, ma foi! my throat is as dry as a lime-kiln. Can't our stores furnish a thimble-ful, mon capitaine, to lay the dust?"

Barré nodded, and the commissary fetched a flagon of wine from a little runlet, jealously guarded against the last emergency. The famished men looked longingly at the brimming cup, but none begrudged the brave fellow his last draft.

"Your health, mon capitaine and brothers all! A safe, swift voyage to you, and many, many, happy years beyond!" he said, standing amidships. Then with courtly grace he bowed first to Barré and sipped the wine. Another bow, with a sweeping glance and wave of the hand holding the cup, took in the whole company. Every eye was upon him save Briancourt's, who had gone forward and kept his back turned. Then he drained the cup with a deep draught. Ye gods! What nectar!

In another moment he began to sing. Never, it seemed to them, had they heard from him song so entrancing. As he chanted the praise of friendship, the sweets of love, the joys of home, those famished men forget their pangs. Unwonted tears coursed down gaunt cheeks. Some sobbed audibly, searching the pitiless expanse, as it were for a glimpse of the home the singer's genius had conjured up.

With a soft, low cadence the song ceased. The

audience sat silent, with dim eyes and swelling hearts. There was not a movement, but of the little craft rolling on the glassy swell and the uncouth sail slowly swinging. Then, in the utter silence, was heard a sudden swish. It was a huge shark dashing by.

Silence again, then a low, grating sound, — Briancourt, screened by the sail, whetting his dagger — for Rossignol's heart.

The singer began once more. Now his voice rang out like a trumpet. At the martial notes wet eyes grew bright, wasted forms straightened. It was a ballade, come down, he would have them believe, from troubadour days. Its theme was of the glorious time when Charles the Hammer shattered the Saracen hosts on the plains of Tours and saved Europe. A Frankish knight, following too fast the fleeing infidels, had outridden his comrades. His spent horse, falling, pinned him to the earth with a broken leg. A band of the miscreants turned and trooped towards him with fierce cries. Powerless to fight, he scorned death from such as they and, with a defiant cry, struck his dagger to his heart.

"Not by the hand of a dog!" rang out the last verse. Then the singer's voice died into silence, and he lifted his dagger, while men turned away their heads and caught their breath. A sudden uproar stayed his hand.

"My God! See La Chère!" horror-struck voices cried, and the men crowded about the lad where he weltered, the blood streaming from a wound over the heart.

As Rossignol bent over him with passionate grief,

the dying boy's eyes looked into his full of the light of love. With a moan and a cry, "Oh Raoul, my son! my son! Would God I had died for thee!" Rossignol clasped him to his bosom. There the lad fell asleep, smiling like a child on his mother's breast.

The sacrifice served its purpose. Rossignol alone was still starving. After the calms came furious storms, and the crazy craft was dashed hither and thither. Some declared that God's wrath was upon it, and that they might never hope to see land again, but must forever be driven over stormy seas.

In starless nights, above the shrieking gale, they could distinguish, they vowed, La Chère's voice moaning, while his wraith hovered about the shrouds.

Nevertheless, the winds were driving the vessel to a haven. At last the welcome shores of France rose on the horizon. An English vessel bore down on this strange craft, in which sat livid skeletons, too weak to handle a sail, took them on board, and set them ashore at Havre.

Wild excitement followed their appearance. Everybody remembered the expedition that had sailed the year before for New France. Now the rumor that a miserable remnant had returned ran quickly through the city. Townsfolk flocked to the waterside. Their curiosity quickly turned into pity when they saw the wretched victims of hunger and thirst lying, more dead than alive, where the English sailors had laid them. At once they busied themselves with caring for the unfortunates.

Presently two young women came with eager steps down the quay. They hastened anxiously from

group to group, scanning each cadaverous face, blackened by hunger and exposure, and looking into the sunken eyes, some of which seemed closed forever.

"Ah!" they cried, as they came to one who, apparently, hovered on the brink of another world, and each seized the other's hand convulsively.

The elder was quickly on her knees by his side and took the cold, wasted hand in hers, shivering at its deathlike touch. The younger had turned away and was eagerly pursuing her quest. Presently she came back to her sister's side, sorrowful disappointment written on her face.

"Poor, poor fellow! What he must have suffered!" whispered the elder, rising. "Do you think that he can possibly recover?"

"I scarcely think it," the younger faltered absently. With set features and quivering lip she was gazing into space.

The elder threw herself again on her knees beside the sea-worn voyager, chafing his hand between both hers and trying to call some sign of consciousness into his deathlike countenance.

The sunken eyes slowly opened and stared vacantly.

"Monsieur Rossignol — do you not know me?" the girl cried, overjoyed, and pressed her lips on the blackened, wasted fingers, that lay cold and stiff in hers, as passionately as if she would fain breathe her warm young life into his perishing frame. Still the eyes were stony and meaningless.

"Oh, Marguerite, we must save him! He cannot die!" she cried. "Do you hasten to Doctor Renaud and beg him to come instantly. Then hurry home,

have a bed warmed and made ready. Get a litter, and come back quickly as you can with hot broth and wine." Then she resumed her assiduous attentions.

Happily, foreseeing such an emergency, an opulent neighbor had brought a flask of that exquisite cordial which, time out of mind, — until an ungrateful republic took away the privilege, — the good fathers of the Grande Chartreuse have distilled, delicate as Queen Mab's sleeping cup, potent as the magic draught with which the Old Man of the Mountain transported his subjects to a sensuous paradise. Of this precious elixir the girl conveyed a thimbleful between Rossignol's livid and cracked lips.

Then she eagerly watched for a sign of returning consciousness, all the while chafing his hands alternately between her soft, white palms.

Anon the dim eyes brightened.

"Do you know me, Madeleine, — Madeleine Marcel?" she cried, hanging over him wistfully.

A faint gleam of intelligence answered her, and, overjoyed, she redoubled her activity.

When Dr. Renaud came, he found the patient conscious and, by force of an almost preterhuman vitality, in a moderately hopeful way of recovery. After he had administered to him a few teaspoonfuls of wine and a small portion of the warm broth which Marguerite had brought, he gave permission for his removal.

Tenderly lifted into a litter, Rossignol was slowly borne to Madame Marcel's house, where the gentle mistress awaited him.

"Where is Étienne?" was the question which the three women's sorrowful eyes asked of each other,

as they hung over the older man and nursed the flickering spark of life.

The wretched survivors of the voyage were all cared for by kindly citizens. Some died. The most recovered. Of these Briancourt was one. After two or three months of recruiting he was able to start on his way homeward. The story of the disastrous expedition had been bruited through the land, and as he slowly journeyed south interest and sympathy met him everywhere, with hospitable entertainment. Thus, by easy stages, he made his way to Lourdes.

PART III

CHAPTER XV

MONARCH OF ALL HE SURVEYED

EVEN though marooned on an island three thousand miles from his native land, Étienne was by no means in despair.

All about him Nature was serene and beautiful. With the blue sky overhead, the sunlight sparkling on the glad waters, the breeze rushing in from the sea, full of life, mere existence was a joy.

With delight he turned to survey his surroundings. The land rose in hillocks, thickly wooded with pines and live-oaks, draped with Spanish moss, and an occasional palmetto. To the northward, not far away, it ran out in a low point, on which there were no trees, but only a stretch of sand-hills covered with bayberry and coarse grass. Beyond this was an expanse of water, some two miles wide,

evidently an inlet from the sea; and beyond was land again.

He threaded his way through the woods, which he had rightly surmised to be narrow, and came out on a beautiful ocean-beach terminating in one direction in the point already mentioned and, in the other, extending as far as he could see. He began to walk along it briskly. Where the sea broke in a long line of foam on the shore, a fine veil of silvery mist floated in the air. Even the hoarse cries of gulls hovering over the water seemed mellowed into harmony with the environment. Just beyond the line where the waves broke a shoal of porpoises gamboled, playful as a flock of lambs. Everywhere there was life, abundant and joyous, but no sign of man. And he was glad of this solitude. All this beauty was his, to be enjoyed by him, unharassed by any fear of intrusion from coarse men, with their vices and their brutality. Thank God! he was free from the devilish crew at Charles Fort, free to work out his own destiny. Probably, friendly Indians were not far away. In due time he would find them, and, he did not doubt, be welcomed among them. Thus he would have a refuge until Ribaut's return. Then home! Or should he remain with the outcoming colony?

He walked briskly along the shore. A little flock of sandpipers flitted ahead, settled, then rose again at his near approach, with their plaintive cry. On one hand the ocean, serene in its majesty, a Titan smiling in his sleep; on the other, the dark forest, fronted with a rampart of snowy sand-hills; overhead the blue sky, with the sun verging to its setting.

In the line of sand-dunes heaped up between high-water mark and the woods he noted one taller than the rest. It would give him a wider view, and he climbed it, in the hope of seeing in the distance the smoke of a village. When he looked southward, for the mainland, he saw water, a wide inlet! He looked around. On all sides water! He was on an island. It was plain that the devilish crew had put him there to perish of hunger and thirst.

Despair at the first overwhelmed him. "With six inches of steel," he said to himself bitterly, feeling in his bosom Rossignol's parting gift, "I must confront the elements, beat off hunger and thirst, and keep Death at bay." What a mockery it seemed! He turned away from the beauty around him and threw himself face downward on the sand. Let the end come, the sooner the better.

After a time he rose and looked about him. It was night. The silent stars shone forth their message of eternal peace, the air softly throbbed with soothing sounds, the soughing of the night-wind in the answering pines, the rustling of the palmetto fronds, and the measured beat of the ocean on the shore.

"Shame on my doubt and fear!" he said to himself, and thenceforth he never knew a moment's discouragement.

That night he lay among the dunes. On the bare, dry sand, with naught between him and the sky, with the music of the sea in his ears, he slept the sweet sleep of perfect peace. And at morning how gloriously the dawn came up out of the purple ocean!

Hungry and thirsty, he plunged into the woods, to

see what he might find. A deer rose a few paces from him, gazed at him wonderingly, then bounded slowly away, quite unterrified. "Go in peace, gentle creature," he said, "you are right in not fearing me. I am as harmless as you."

Presently he came to an opening. In the midst of it was a small pond. He hastened to it, plunged his hands, and scooped up water. It was warm, but sweet. Thank God! he could not die of thirst. His hunger he satisfied with haws and berries. With the coming of winter, if it found him alive, such supplies would cease. And then — but why look so far? Trust and hope must be his watchwords.

His next need was a shelter, and he set himself to building a hut. With no tools but his hunting-knife, it was slow work. Two forked saplings, with a third laid across them, formed the framework; a thatch of palmetto-fronds was the covering. By night his hut was ready, and with a keen sense of pleasure he laid himself down under his shelter on a couch of fragrant wax-myrtle. How delicious was the sense of freedom, as he lay in his own rude home, listening to the soft voices of the night and lulled to sleep by the low, rhythmic beat of the sea!

On the second day, as he wandered aimlessly along the shore of the little pond which furnished him drink, he listlessly threw into the water a bit of reed which he had in his hand, As he watched it wafted by the breeze toward the other side, a thought flashed into his mind. Using wind and tide, why might he not float away from the island? Why should he await a lingering death, when forethought and energy might

save him? True, Rossignol had intimated that he hoped to rescue him. But could he? It was doubtful. Probably, his influence had already been strained to the utmost in obtaining a mitigation of his sentence. And even if his champion should succeed, what a prospect! Better far the tender mercies of the wild woods. But, if he might escape from his present exile, and yet retain his freedom, that would be different. The mainland once gained, he felt sure of being able to make good his foothold among friendly Indians until Ribaut's return.

From this time his every thought was fixed on floating himself from the island. A raft was the natural resource. True, he had no tool but his knife. Still he might use driftwood, of which there was plenty, and lash it together with vines.

Resolved to begin his work instantly, he was gathering flotsam along the beach when something imbedded in the sand arrested his attention. It looked like the edge of a plank sticking up about an inch above the surface. He scraped away the sand for a foot or two. A plank it seemed indeed. He wondered much how it came there, and continued to free it, exposing more of its length. He tugged at it, but could not move it.

Then a wild surmise set him to digging like mad. Could it be? He easily scooped away the dry sand with his hands, eagerly following the outline of the object. Then it stood revealed. A buried Indian canoe!

He went to work and dug out the dry sand that filled it. The little craft was sound as a nut. Merely

a cypress log, hollowed by fire, it would have been good for hundreds of years more. Doubtless some violent gale had broken it from its moorings on an inland stream and, sweeping it seaward, had thrown it above the high-water mark, where it had become imbedded in the drifting sand. Even a paddle lay ready to hand, in the bottom.

What a find! He dragged it down into the water. It floated like a duck and was dry as a bone, not a crack in it.

The tide was ebbing, and he must wait for it to spend itself. With the first sign of the flood he launched out light-heartedly on the sound. It was the middle of the afternoon. By sunset his island-prison had sunk below the horizon, and other land was looming up ahead and on either hand, miles away.

Sea-gulls began circling around him in great numbers, swooping down close to him with shrill cries. He soon saw the cause of this demonstration. He had come near to a low bank covered with thousands of these birds. He determined to spend the night on it. The moment that he stepped ashore he was greeted with a deafening discord of cries, while the air was filled with frightened birds flapping and fluttering about his head. Poor creatures! It was a roost and breeding-place of theirs. Happily for him, the bank was so thickly covered with eggs that he could scarcely take a step without crushing one. After his meagre diet of berries, he fell greedily upon them. They served him both as meat and drink. Then, after drawing the canoe upon the bank above highwater mark, he stretched himself upon the sand

and slept, surrounded by his feathered neighbors, who had settled down into a reasonable degree of quiet.

The next morning he made another meal of raw eggs and, escorted by a hundred angry gulls fluttering and squawking about his head, dragged down his canoe and once more launched forth on the bosom of the sound.

The day grew to be intolerably hot. Under a blistering sun, and almost blinded by the fierce glare, he paddled his way up the sound, with wooded shores on either side, miles away.

Once, far away on the left, he caught for a moment the gleam of something white against the dark-blue background of distant woods. Could it be a sail? Rossignol's promise came into his mind. The next instant he lost the object from view. It was but the sunlight glancing on a gull's wing, he said to himself, and thought no more of it.

By noon he was almost perishing with heat and weariness. He ate some gull's eggs that he had taken the precaution to put into the canoe, and was revived. Late in the afternoon, a dark cloud came rolling up swiftly from the ocean, seamed with incessant lightning, and quickly overspread the sky.

Every moment the wind freshened, and the surface of the water, almost black, broke in foaming crests. Once he looked behind him. The horizon was obliterated. Sky and water were merged in one dark mass driving towards him with a dull roar. He was on the bosom of the sound, miles from land, and he expected nothing else than to be engulfed by the

fast rising waves. In another moment the squall burst upon him, in fury, accompanied by terrific thunder and lightning and a torrent of rain. The sky charged upon the water, and the water rose, as in wrath, to meet it. He knew that his only safety lay in keeping his little cockle-shell straight before wind and sea. He succeeded, and the light cypress rode the swell buoyantly while the gale was driving it swiftly.

Ere long the storm had rolled away inland, rumbling sullenly, and the sky overhead cleared. He found himself opposite a low wooded shore, and, drenched to the skin, with the canoe half-full of water, and night coming on, he headed for it. As far as he could see the land extended unbrokenly, and he believed it to be the mainland, as indeed it was.

As he stepped ashore, he felt that the first stage of his deliverance was accomplished. He walked a little way into the woods and, soaked as he was, without fire, food, or shelter, he drew together a little heap of pine-needles, threw himself on it, and slept the sleep of utter exhaustion.

The next morning his limbs ached, his eyes were heavy, and his head seemed nigh to bursting with pain. Still he plodded through the forest aimlessly, in the vague hope of coming upon an Indian trail.

Wandering blindly, as in a dream, he plashed knee-deep through swamps where water lay in stagnant pools, and dark morasses where the hot and humid air stimulated a rank vegetation. Thorny lianas threw themselves breast-high across his path or entangled his feet. Innumerable snakes sluggishly un-

coiled themselves from overhanging limbs and low bushes and dropped into the water, then wriggled slowly away. Nature seemed to have spent her energy in putting forth every form of noxious and hideous life. Mosquitoes swarmed about him in clouds, and drove him wild with their envenomed bites. He started as he nearly stumbled upon an alligator basking motionless beside a black pool and watching him with dull, incurious eye. As he drew back with a shudder, it dragged its hideous length to the water's edge, plunged, then rose again and lay on the surface, fronting him with its protruding eyes.

The moist heat was stifling. No air stirred under the dense canopy of foliage. He felt no hunger, but was parched with thirst, which the tepid swamp water could not quench.

At last he came out upon a sandy ridge, covered with tall pines, beneath which was a sparse undergrowth. Here was at least life in the air, and he had left behind the plague of mosquitoes. Exhausted and burning, he threw himself down. In the ceaseless murmur of the trees he seemed to hear a cradle-song of his childhood, and he slept.

CHAPTER XVI

HELL AND HEAVEN

ÉTIENNE lay delirious and racked with pain. In his dreams his fevered brain rioted in wild extravagance. At one time Félicie sat by his side. When he stretched forth his arms to clasp her, a dusky hag grinned in his face. Once he led her to the altar. At the moment when his father's hand was raised in benediction, suddenly Briancourt stood in his place, and the attendant maidens of Lourdes, transformed into savage women, fell upon him with fury, tore him away from his bride, and handed her over to Briancourt.

Then he roamed again his lonely island; he floated on the glassy waters, under the burning sun; he staggered through stifling swamps, with coiled snakes hissing under his feet. Always there were savage faces about him. Sometimes he caught glimpses of them dogging his steps, gliding from tree to tree, the arrow on the string. Withal he was dimly conscious of racking pain and burning thirst.

He awoke rational, but fearfully weak. He lay in utter exhaustion, indifferent either to life or death. He had no longing for home, father — anything; no concern for God and Eternity, Heaven or Hell. Everything seemed dim, remote, phantasmal. He asked

nothing more than to lie there, lapped in the arms of Nature. If Life had come to him offering her choicest gifts, he would have refused all but one, — a drink of cool water.

Lying there thus, he thought that he heard voices speaking low near him. He started and tried to sit up. Immediately two Indian crones came and bent over him. They had found him, on the previous evening, and had tended him all the night. Their homely faces hovering about him had furnished material for his delirious fancies. They offered him food. He feebly waved it away, but signed that he craved drink. One of them fetched a gourd of cool water, and he drained it.

All that day he lay there, barely more than conscious, dead to all love of living, while the sun wheeled slowly across the sky.

All the time one of the old women hovered near, the two relieving each other, and neither remaining long. They came and went stealthily, looking behind and about them. They had seen Frenchmen entertained in their village with lavish hospitality. But now, when the general feeling had turned against the lazy, greedy strangers, they apprehended cruel treatment for one of them, alone, unarmed, and sick. Étienne's helplessness appealed to them, and they were resolved to save him.

With the coming of night the fever returned, and again he was delirious. Then he had a strange experience. He dreamed himself dead, seized by demons, and dragged to hell. For an endless time he was enveloped in flames, breathing sulphurous fumes,

while fiends danced around him with mocking cries. Then came a wonderful change. Good angels rescued and bore him in their arms to a place of delicious coolness and repose. Surely Heaven! Then he awoke; but how changed! The fever and the pain in his bones were gone, and his head was clear. He found himself in a hut of wattled boughs, lying on a fragrant couch covered with skins. He was weak as an infant, but he felt as if re-created, and he was hungry.

His dream of Hell and Heaven had a certain material basis. His nurses had conveyed him stealthily to their medicine-wigwam, situated at a little distance from their village, having heated it almost to suffocation by a fire kindled within. Then they laid him, stripped, on a low cot covered with skins, and, retiring, closed every aperture. A great cauldron, seething and bubbling with a decoction of medicinal herbs, filled the place with a cloud of pungent vapor. While they marched around the wigwam, howling dolefully and clamorously appealing to the evil spirit to come out of him, he dreamed of Hell. But the remedy was doing its work, and the sweat trickled in rivulets down his body. When his nurses thought the demon exorcised, they wrapped him in deerskin robes and carried him back to the hut which they had built for him in the woods.

This stood on a wide, low mound that had been used by their remote ancestors for ceremonial purposes and for burying the dead. For centuries it had been regarded with deep awe, and it was so rarely approached that a person keeping carefully within its limits was reasonably safe from discovery. A heavy growth of

trees covered it, and the hut was so well screened that one might have passed within a few paces without observing it. At dusk one or other of Étienne's friends, came stealthily and brought him food. Of water there was abundance: a brook ran by the foot of the knoll.

Thus several weeks passed in which Étienne's recovery progressed steadily. Alone though he was, he never was lonesome. He had the comradeship of the wildwood and its creatures, with the boundless friendliness of the great trees. Squirrels frisked about him and grew very companionable. With his ear attuned to Nature's voices, a crow's cawing was more interesting than much talk he had heard from other bipeds. Then, with the coming of the night, the woods grew vocal with the whippoorwill's plaintive note, and myriad fire-flies flashed through the solemn aisles. As he lay in his hut, watching through the open door and the tree-tops the slow movement of the stars, now and again the hooting of an owl, the barking of a fox, or the savage cry of a wild-cat added a ruder interest.

At the first his life was a woodland idyl, but as his strength returned he began to chafe at his inactivity.

CHAPTER XVII

CANOGA

ONE evening, at dusk, he was surprised to see a new face looking at him with great, wistful eyes, over the heads of his kind guardians. Her coming startled him, so stealthily were the old women's visits habitually made. Who was she?

At any time, the new-comer's appearance would have aroused more than a passing interest. In contrast with the greasy, tattered skins that covered the Edisto crones, her garments were of the finest fawn-skin, bleached and spotless. Of unusual height, slender and willowy, she bore herself with unconscious distinction. Her features, of a type which Étienne had never seen in the western world, somehow recalled a piece of classic statuary which he had seen in the castle at Pau, one of Marguerite of Angoulême's choicest treasures. Her face was a pure oval, her forehead broad and low, and most striking of all were splendid eyes, bright with intelligence and soft with boundless sympathy. Who, Étienne asked himself, was this superb young creature who was gazing at him, like some fine denizen of the wild woods, unfrightened, but evidently full of wondering awe? Her lighter hue, — a fine olive, mantling with rich blood — her erect, slender form, her finely chiseled

features, her expressive, lustrous eyes, the proud poise of her shapely head — all suggested a higher race, widely different from any that he knew. Standing by the two Edisto crones, she was as a turtle-dove beside two bedraggled cow-birds. Who could she be?

Evidently her coming was part of a plan, for thenceforth she never failed to appear with whichever of his guardians brought his food. She always, however, kept herself in the background.

Sitting, one day, lost in thought, he was startled by the cracking of a twig. He looked up. The Indian girl stood before him, alone, evidently abashed at her own audacity. Amid the lights and shadows of the sunlit woodland, she looked with her slender form and lustrous eyes and with her air of girlish timidity, like a startled deer.

She wore her finest garb of bleached fawn-skin, curiously wrought and stained in quaint devices. Strings of variegated sea-shells were entwined in her shining hair, which, parted smoothly over her broad, low brow, fell to her waist, set off with plumes of the red flamingo and the snow-white egret. A necklace of pearls, such as the one which the Princess of Cofachiqui put around Hernando de Soto's neck, hung down to her waist. With her wild, woodland grace and her maiden coyness, she might have served for a model of a Columbian Diana.

Étienne welcomed his visitor with a bright smile which put her more at her ease. Then she timidly tendered her offering, a shirt of the finest fawn-skin, bleached and daintily ornamented with symbolic devices in various colors. It was a piece of genuine

art-work, and she had wrought on it since the day when she first saw the pale stranger. Had he understood the emblematic devices on the garment, he would have known that they were the most sacred symbols of her religion, and were meant to express her adoration for a superhuman being, the Child of the Sun.

Of his thanks, of course, the maid understood not a word; but the tone of his voice, his bright smile, and the look in his eye spoke a language that, all the world over, needs no interpreter, and she tripped away through the woodland shadows a happy mortal. She had laid her little gift on the shrine of her divinity, and he had graciously accepted it.

After this she came often, always bringing him something. His tattered clothes were gradually replaced with deerskin garments, and instead of his worn-out shoes moccasins covered his feet. One day she found him trying to shape a bow out of green wood. The next day she brought him a beautiful one, with a quiver of arrows. Then she taught him to use it. By this time the two were growing into some understanding of each other's speech. He learned her name, Canoga, which meant Sweet Water. His she pronounced charmingly, Etayan. He taught her a few words of his tongue, and she taught him many of hers. With these and with signs they managed to convey a good deal to each other. It was astonishing, he said to himself, how she brightened his life, and how he looked forward to her visits. They were daily gleams of sunshine in the monotony of his woodland life.

The summer had passed, and the nights were grow-

ing chilly. Canoga brought him fire and intimated that he must cover it by day, lest the smoke should betray him. Thus he sat in the crisp evenings by his fire, and in the bright October days rambled about his little domain, careful to keep within its bounds. Health and strength had come back to him, he chafed at his confinement, and the yearning for home grew ever stronger. What if Ribaut should come and sail away while he was in hiding? He must do something.

One day Canoga found him sitting with his face buried in his hands. Thoughts of home, of his father, even of Félicie, overwhelmed him. He heard a light step and looked up. She was there. She saw that he was in trouble and guessed its cause. In an instant she was on her knees at his feet. Pointing away towards the coast, she signed that she would go with him.

Hitherto she had seemed an artless creature. No thought of her in any other light had entered his mind, and their relations had been absolutely frank and easy. Now the license he had witnessed at Charles Fort, accepted on all sides as a matter of course, recurred to his mind. He turned coldly away and strode into the woods.

The girl stood a few moments, as if dazed, then walked slowly towards her village. As she went down the thickly covered slope of the knoll and out through the open woodland, under the solemn pines, over the sun-flecked earth carpeted with needles, Nature spoke to her through many voices. A squirrel, chattering at her from a low bough, chid her presumption. A blue jay with mocking scream derided her

disappointment. A woodpecker's steady tap-tapping pleaded for patience. Overhead, an eagle, seen through openings in the foliage, wheeling high against the blue canopy of heaven, hinted hope and courage. But the great Mother from her loving heart sighed in the tree tops a friendly warning, "Hope never more, Canoga!" dying away in a prolonged, "Never-never-never-more!"

CHAPTER XVIII

HO FOR CHARLES FORT!

THE next day Canoga came. Étienne was not in sight. She looked into his cabin. It was empty and bare. She turned to the fireplace outside. The ashes were cold. The Child of the Sun was gone! She uttered no cry, shed no tear, but stood a while like a statue, then walked slowly away.

Étienne indeed had departed, his growing desire to escape from hiding brought to a sudden climax by the incident with Canoga. He was disappointed in her. It was sad to part in this way, after all their pleasant intercourse. But how could she, poor girl, be expected to be so much better than the rest of her people? On the whole, not to see her again seemed the least painful way.

The good old crones who had rescued him he could not thank. To have acquainted them with his purpose would have defeated it, for, whatever their object, they plainly wished to keep him.

As to the course he must take he had only the vaguest notion, and no guide but the sun. Still he started off in good heart. He soon lost his bearings, however, through being compelled to make frequent detours, in order to avoid swamps and marshes.

All the day he roamed, mostly through open wood-

land, around him giant pines towering up with scarce a bough until, near the top, they opened out in a dark canopy, where soft breathings made ceaseless music; under foot, the sandy earth, brown with a thick carpet of needles, emitting a fine dry aroma; everywhere a thin silvery haze. Sometimes he must cross brooks that trickled in a muddy bed through wet hollows where sweet-gum and tupelo and cypress festooned with Spanish moss rose above a dense mass of glossy dark-green shrubbery, the deer's favorite covert. Once he came upon a thicket of chinquapin, the prickly burrs wide open, and gathered a good store of sweet little nuts, while a colony of outraged squirrels frisked and chattered overhead. Near by, pear-shaped haws, of a fine, fruity flavor, helped to stay his hunger. Going on, he found himself on the margin of a wide pond sleeping under a veil of haze, coots scouting the shores, out in the middle a great flock of widgeon, hundreds upon hundreds, harbingers of approaching winter, resting motionless from their long flight.

Once he caught sight of an Indian village, but carefully shunned it. When night fell he unrolled his bundle of deerskins and, without fire or shelter, but light-hearted, laid him down to sleep.

The next day he was tramping on in the same blind fashion when he suddenly encountered face to face a party of Indians. Quite unexpectedly, they greeted him most cordially, called him by name, and evidently were equally surprised and rejoiced at meeting him. Ignorant of the mystery that had been made of his disappearance, he was puzzled. They led him to their village, where his coming was hailed with shouts of

joy. Soon the whole population of the village, men, women, and children, crowded around, gazing at him with curiosity and wonder. While he devoured the food they set before him, they kept up a ceaseless jabber, of which he understood only here and there a word.

Presently he noted that they were looking at him with an air of pity. Then a man caught his eye and, stretching his arms wide, said, "Canaoa! Canaoa!"

His meaning was plain. A big canoe, with canvas spread. Ribaut had come!

Étienne sprang to his feet, overjoyed.

Then the man, with his arms still stretched out wide, turned his back and strode away from him.

The ship had sailed! While he lay hidden in the woods his only chance of deliverance had come and gone!

It was a hard blow. But Ribaut undoubtedly had brought out and left a colony. He determined therefore to go on, sure that he would find countrymen at Charles Fort.

His Indian friends probably thought him crazy. They tried hard to dissuade him, but of course he could not understand their arguments. He persisted, while they shook their heads and talked volubly among themselves. By every possible sign and by long speeches they urged him to remain and become one of them. They contrived to make the point plain enough, that they wished him to stay. Still he refused, resolutely shaking his head. Finally the Indians, finding him set in his purpose, intimated that they would pilot him through the forest.

At dawn he started, with two guides, and in the afternoon came to the shore of a wide water, where a canoe was hidden in a cove. There his guides left him, and he soon was gilding down the broad river towards the ocean.

The tide had begun to ebb, and the current swept him along swiftly, with little exertion. Full of joyful anticipations of meeting his countrymen, he was keenly sensitive to the enchantment of the scene. On either side of the broad stream were wide stretches of marsh flooded by the tide, miles of green velvet. Back of this plain of verdure, hosts of dark pines crowded in dense ranks to the water's edge. Here and there jutted out a point whose grove of live-oaks, with their dim arches hung with swaying pendants of silvery moss, revived the fascination that drew our ancestors to the Druidic worship. Here and there in the wide expanse of marsh rose little wooded hummocks, darker islets in the sea of living green.

The autumnal air was soft, filled with a fine, golden haze. Not a sound or sign of man's presence disturbed the stillness. The wide surface was only ruffled now and then by a wild duck diving or by the plunge of a porpoise. Flocks of curlews swept by with shrill cries. An osprey circled high, uttering piercing calls to his mate perched on the top of a towering dead pine, while at once he kept a keen eye on the surface for a heedless fish and scanned the dark point whence he knew that his enemy, the robber eagle, was watching him. As the sun neared its setting, flights of sea-fowl, high in air, dropping now and then a note out of the blue, steered their course

towards their roosting-place, dwindling into a speck, then vanishing.

How beautiful and peaceful! How softly might life flow, amid such scenes! In fancy Étienne saw a settlement planted on these shores where his father and Rossignol and a few more friends — the Marcels, if they could be persuaded to come to the New World, — would make a happy little community, far from the strife of men.

All the while the river was widening. The shores began to be familiar, for he was nearing Charles Fort. He looked back. The sun was setting in a sea of gold, and all the air was steeped in rosy light. It seemed an enchanted world, and he paused a few moments, drifting, while he drank in its beauty, touched with that gentle melancholy inseparable from the glories of autumn.

The purple evening had darkened into night, when he turned into the Chenonceau. Yonder, outlined against the dusky sky, was the fort. But where were the lights? Everywhere was darkness, everywhere silence. Coming nearer, he heard the mocking screech of an owl perched on the roof-tree of a cabin.

A horrible fear seized him. He sprang ashore and ran to the nearest hut. The door stood open, and the hearth was cold. He hastened to the next. At his approach the owl flitted away, with a derisive cry. Nowhere a sign of human life. Where were his countrymen? He ran into the fort. It was dismantled, the guns gone! A fox skulked by him through the sally-port. He ran down from the fort. He shouted and listened. Only echo answered.

Then a line of bark and chips revealed the ghastly

truth, showing where a vessel had been built. The garrison was gone, no colony had come, and he was alone in the New World.

Black despair overwhelmed him, and, careless of either life or death, he crept into one of the empty huts, threw himself down on the bare floor, and lay in a sort of stupor while the night-wind soughed dolefully through the abandoned cabins, swung the doors on their creaking hinges, and then departed sighing amid the tree tops.

He awoke chilled and stiff and faint. The sun shone brightly, the air was crisp with the breath of morning, and the blue water sparkled in the glad light. But for the homeless exile there was no joy of living. It mattered little that he had not a morsel of food. He cared not for life. Too apathetic to go in search of berries, he was all the day in a torpor. While he lay like a stone the sun wheeled slowly across the sky. No sight of living thing was there, but of the sea-bird hovering in air or skimming the water, no sound but the shrill cry of osprey or gull or the whistle of curlew, with the ceaseless sighing of the wind in the murmuring pines.

By evening he experienced sensations not new to him. His eyes burned and seemed leaden, his head throbbed, his whole body ached. The fever held him once more in its grasp. He shivered with cold, while his brain burned.

In his delirium he wandered amid harassing scenes, bursting his way through thickets, or plunging waist-deep through swamps, sometimes scorching, sometimes freezing.

Then came a delightful change. He was in his old home, a child again, lying in his mother's arms. She sang a lullaby while her hands caressed his hair.

He awoke. A low voice crooned a strange song. Light fingers stroked his hair. He opened his eyes and found his head pillowed in Canoga's lap. With a peculiar sense of satisfaction, he fell asleep again.

When he was conscious once more, there was Canoga, hanging over him, moistening his parched lips, smoothing the deerskin under his aching limbs, sleeping only a few minutes at a time and, at his slightest movement, on her feet beside him.

Thus matters went for days.

CHAPTER XIX

ILLUMINATION

ÉTIENNE lay one morning on the couch of deerskin robes which Canoga had spread for him, very weak, but convalescent. His brain, clear now of the feverish mists that had clouded it for days, was able to think, and it was thinking a good deal. What was Canoga doing there? Clearly, she had followed him.

What a fool he had been, he said to himself! Undoubtedly, she had divined the cause of his depression and his desire to join his countrymen, and she had simply offered the aid which she knew he would need in order to reach them.

Throughout her mortifying experiences how nobly she had borne herself! He looked back over all the time that he had known her and recalled her constant good offices, always modest, always unobtrusive. Yet, in the face of all this, he had scorned her as a member of an inferior people, visiting on her head the sins of her race.

His mistake was the more palpably inexcusable because she was so plainly superior to her surroundings, mentally and morally as much above the general level of the Edisto women as she was different from them in form and feature.

With such thoughts he was occupied when Canoga,

coming in with a little food, saw in his wan face a look she had never seen before, a look in which contrition, a plea for pardon, and gratitude struggled for expression.

Reaching out his wasted hand, he caught hers and pressed it. Not a word was said about the past, but with this single act on his part and her glad smile all was buried in the oblivion of utter forgiveness.

From that hour Étienne's admiration of Canoga grew fast. He saw constantly new graces developing in her.

Indeed, in the warm sunlight of appreciation and confidence, she put forth fresh charms every day. Devotion to him and a principle implanted in her mind on that wretched day when she stood by the cold ashes of Étienne's fire, were glorifying her. Henceforth a new ideal would rule her life. One painful experience had lifted her to a plane to which her civilized sisters have climbed through the stress and anguish of ages.

Now her world became all brightness. Services hitherto meekly performed were rendered with a bright smile and beaming eye. There was a new spring in her step, a fresh grace in her carriage. The sunshine of happiness had changed the patient nurse into a joyous and inspiring companion. Every hour she showed more of that indefinable charm of tender womanhood that her sex has won through the long process of the ages.

Every day the bond of mutual sympathy grew stronger, and life brighter for both. Those were halcyon days when they sat together in the warm

sunshine, looking out on the sparkling waters, or, when he grew stronger, strolled in the woods, rejoicing in each other.

Who was this superb, this delightful young creature? he often asked himself. It seemed impossible that she could be an Edisto.

CHAPTER XX

A DAUGHTER OF THE NATCHEZ

WHERE the Mississippi rolls his mighty flood seaward dwelt a proud old race, the Natchez, having a strange pagan culture of its own, closely akin to that of the Mayas, of Yucatan. Like the Incas of Peru, the ruling clan traced its descent from the Sun. No older line sat on a throne in Europe. Beside it the Hohenzollerns were upstarts. For generations — nobody knew how many — it had ruled by divine right, and ruled despotically. Did the chief walk abroad, armed servitors, like Roman lictors, attended him. When he went to witness the awful sacrifices in the dim temple, where hoary-headed priests kept alive the perpetual fire, before him solemnly paced an augur in white vestments wearing on his bosom the disk of burnished copper that symbolized his chief ancestor, the Sun. When he died, a hecatomb of slaughtered subjects went to attend him in the other world.

By the law of Indian life, not the chief's son, but the son of a sister must rule, and her husband must be taken from another clan. Thus every Natchez ruler was a demigod on his mother's side, of merely human blood on the other. Nor were the women of this haughty line backward in asserting their preroga-

tive. The patient consort, forsooth, must endure their caprices, their infidelities, their contempt.

Now it chanced once that Meshala, a sister of the reigning chief, coming to womanhood, was consumed with desire to bear a son who should rule. Straightway word went forth, "Meshala will choose a husband," and on a set day the young braves of the various clans assembled. While the chief and his wives looked on, with Meshala at her brother's side, they marched and countermarched, brandishing their weapons; they attacked, retreated, pursued, the sun lighting the splendid play of muscles in their nearly naked bronze bodies.

"Octlan!" said Meshala, low, naming a glorious young giant who outdid them all.

"Octlan!" shouted the chief, and a hundred envious eyes were turned toward the victor, as he modestly strode forward.

"Father me a brave boy, lusty of limb as yourself," said Meshala, as she led him away, looking up into his face with burning eyes.

In due time she bore a child — a comely girl. Her sister, shortly after, gave birth to a boy. Then Meshala's heart turned against Octlan — "girl-father" she dubbed him in scorn — and against her beautiful child, whom, from the day of her birth, she handed over to another to nurse. To the husband of her choice she gave only cold looks, to the lovely babe scarcely so much, while she yielded herself to wanton caprices.

Octlan's high heart, proud as it was gentle, grieved for the motherless little one. Should he see her

grow up to such infamy? Nay, how long would he be tolerated near her? At any hour he might be driven forth from his ignominious elevation, to make room for a successor.

One night found Octlan speeding down the great river in his canoe, with the little one nestling in her bed of buffalo-robes, sometimes sleeping, sometimes cooing softly, while her great eyes watched with infantile wonder the maze of twinkling stars. Hours passed by, and still with tireless arms he drove the little craft that held all his world down the dim reaches of the mighty river, with no sound but the dull bellowing of alligators from the unseen shores and the hooting of owls in dismal swamps.

At dawn he landed, drew the canoe into a canebrake, wove a screen that would shelter his "little turtle-dove" from the fierce sun, gave her food and drink that he had brought, brushed away the insects while she slept, and was happy, bearing her to scenes where they might live their own life together in peace and honor. With the darkness, he launched forth once more on the river and all through the night plied the paddle.

As the second day broke he landed, hid the canoe, and plunged into the forest depths, bearing the little one on his left arm, his good spear in his right hand. In time he struck a trail and followed it to a village. There he found the hospitality of the red man and rested the night. In the morning the villagers would have stayed him, but no, he must go on. So, from tribe to tribe he journeyed, day after day, week by week, ever eastward, resolved to put all the land there

was between himself and pursuit. At last the ocean barred his path, and he found an asylum in Chicora, among the friendly Edistoes. A kindly race, they gladly adopted the splendid young warrior and opened their hearts to the comely little girl with the great, speaking eyes. Canoga (Sweet Water) they called her, so gracious and beautiful she was.

Meanwhile, among the Natchez Octlan's flight had ceased to be a wonder. One day, a brave of the distant Alibamoes, sitting at the feast, told a strange tale of a stalwart youth who had appeared among them, bearing a girl-child in his arms, and had journeyed away to the east. A lurid light gleamed in Meshala's half-shut eyes as she listened. When the tale was done she questioned the visitor apart. Then she sent for dark-browed Mankho, who had long wooed her in vain.

"Go," she said, "to the Alibamoes. Take up Octlan's trail. Follow it to the end. Bring me his scalp and — take me."

Now, day after day, week after week, the dark avenger followed Octlan's path. From tribe to tribe, from village to village, he tracked him, until, one morning, the Edistoes found in the village street the exile's superb body lying on its face, his skull cloven by a blow from behind. With loud lamentations they paid the funeral honors due to a dead chief and laid him to rest among their fathers.

From that hour little Canoga was the pride and darling of the Edistoes. Without father or mother, the whole tribe were her kinsfolk, her home in the chief's cabin. Instinctively they recognized the high

lineage and singular promise of the bright-eyed child. No duties were laid upon her, no household drudgery, the common lot of their women, was expected of her; but she grew up free as the wind, straight as a pine, graceful as a young deer. She did only what she listed, came and went unquestioned, and lived among the Edistoes regarded with an affection that was half awe. Some day, they fondly hoped, she would wed a young chief. But, as she neared womanhood, she made light of all such overtures and with mirthful raillery held her wooers at a distance.

Truth to tell, the young braves, the playmates of her childhood, seemed to her well-meaning boors. Inheriting, with much of her father's stature, his great heart, at once proud and gentle, she would not willingly hurt a human being. Yet there was that within her, though she knew not the story of her birth, and believed herself an Edisto, that shrank from the sordid village life. Without assumption, she felt herself of a higher nature. Cherished though she was by the people of her adoption, she lived among them in a world all her own, a world of feelings, questionings, longings, undreamed of by them.

Then came the pale child of the Sun, and a new world opened. Her visit to Étienne in his concealment had a significance that would have startled him, had he known it. His two old guardians, in carrying out their scheme of producing him at the proper time and securing his adoption into the tribe, to win her support had taken Canoga into their confidence. So they brought her to look upon its subject.

She did not wait to be asked to accompany them on a second, a third, and many subsequent visits. From the first glance the pale stranger fascinated her. Something in his appearance instantly struck an untouched chord in her heart. Was not here the answer to her vague yearnings? The romance, too, of the situation, — the mysterious Child of the Sun sick and dependent, hidden so perilously close to the village, — all this appealed to her mightily. From the moment of their first meeting he became the central interest of her life. How to serve him was her chief thought, the hour when she should see him the bright point which focused all that was vital of each day.

From the first she shared enthusiastically the old women's plan, dreaming with delight of a time when he would be honored among her people. But its success depended on his ignorance of the building of a vessel at Charles Fort. This was the object of keeping him so long in hiding. Let him stay where he was, they argued, until his countrymen should be gone forever beyond his reach. Then they would bring him forth and introduce him publicly, with Canoga's strong influence to back them. On her part, she easily lent herself to this little concealment, in the strong conviction that it was for his good. Did it not reserve him for a glorious destiny?

But on that memorable day, the sight of him grieving, as she divined, for his home and people, was more than she could bear. A generous impulse seized her. She would sacrifice her dreams. Yes, she would even guide him to the coast herself. No doubt it could be reached before the sailing of the great canoe, at the

last reports still unfinished. What though he would be taken from her forever? He would be happy.

Étienne's sudden departure showed that he had misinterpreted her, — to what effect, her womanly instinct readily informed her. Ah! it was humiliating to be so misconceived!

Yet, how full of meaning was his action! What a lesson as to his own feeling! Could it be that he expressed the general sense of his people? No! It could not be. The conduct of the Frenchmen at Charles Fort, by all reports, did not countenance such a notion. It must, then, be his individual point of view. And how fine! How noble! How worthy of a Child of the Sun! It was the first ethical hint on that subject that in all her life had come to her. From such a source it came with power, and her own idealistic nature quickly responded to it.

So, the next few hours were the critical epoch of Canoga's young life. Deeply she pondered the lesson she had received and stored it in her heart, to be the keynote of all her days.

The next morning she went to see Étienne, first, to tell him what she had just now learned, that his countrymen had sailed, and then to convey to him, as best she might, how fully she was at one with him in principle and purpose.

Went to see him, alas! only to find him gone. Gone from her, because he thought evil of her. There were a few moments of innocent shame, of dreadful bewilderment, almost of despair. Then her resolve was taken. He would surely make for Charles Fort. She would follow him. "The Child of the Sun must not perish,"

she said. His countrymen gone, he would need her care. He would be alone, perchance starving. She would stand between him and death.

Then there was the deep longing to set herself right in his eyes, to make him understand, more by her bearing than by words, which she could not command, that his ideal of life was hers.

More than all, though unacknowledged to herself, there was at her heart a keen gnawing to be near him. Such an aching as she felt because he was no more there!

CHAPTER XXI

CANOGA'S NEW WORLD

CANOGA was fast learning Étienne's language; but long before they fully understood each other in words, they were in perfect accord in thought and feeling.

She had brought with her a small stock of food. By the time that this was exhausted the Indians of the neighborhood had found them and provided fresh supplies. Fish were to be had in abundance at their door, and she was skilled in taking them. After he had sufficiently regained his strength spearing became a favorite sport with both. Commonly he paddled the canoe, while she stood in the bow watching, keen-eyed as a fish-hawk, with her lance poised. Woe to the unwary fish that showed a gleam of its silvery side!

Indians of the neighborhood, at the first, visited them frequently. They had always admired Étienne, and they hailed his reappearance with delight. His vagabond countrymen gone, they were free to show their liking. His domestication with a daughter of their race was altogether natural and gratifying. The next step, of course, would be his adoption into the tribe. To this end they urged the young pair to come and live among them. But here they encountered an unexpected difficulty. Not Étienne only, but Canoga, was steadily set against such an

arrangement. The Edistoes, too, sent a deputation, and still another, to urge Canoga's return to her home with Étienne. They offered him their greatest honors, and were deeply chagrined at his refusal.

Indeed there was no reason why the young pair should think of a change. Their life was brim-full of sweet content. All the fine days they spent out of doors. In the long evenings they sat far into the night before a blazing fire in his cabin.

These hours suddenly became full of a new and absorbing interest. One evening Étienne sat reading by the firelight in his Bible, which, to his joy, he had found undisturbed in the niche in his cabin where he had left it hidden, months before. It was tenfold precious now, not only as the Bible, but as the sole outward link with the world of thought. Looking up from the page he caught Canoga's great eyes fastened on him wistfully. What was this strange "medicine," she was wondering, that day after day held him absorbed for hours.

Thinking of no more than gratifying a natural curiosity, he called her to his side and pointed to a familiar and simple word here and there, at the same time pronouncing it aloud. She scanned the page timidly. There was not a clue. How could those queer little marks mean the things that he called them? She shook her head sadly. The white man's "medicine" passed her comprehension. Her people's picture-writing was different; a child could understand it.

She drew away disappointed. But *he* was the master of all mysteries. He could interpret this to her.

"Make it talk to Canoga," she appealed to him humbly.

Étienne began to read slowly aloud. She listened, entranced. The Child of the Sun's mighty medicine was talking to her, the simple Edisto girl! Before her opened dim vistas of a strange, new world.

He read on, and she listened intent and amazed. That night she went to her cabin, to lie awake divided between doubt and hope. Could she ever solve this awful mystery? Sometimes she dared hope she might. Then the gulf between her and the Child of the Sun would be narrowed!

The next evening she brought the book to him and with pathetic eagerness said, "Make it talk to Canoga!"

He read, and she listened with the same wonder as before. After a while he paused. She came near, more fearing than hoping, and scanned the page. Suddenly, her eyes flashing, she pounced upon a word with her finger and cried, "*Feu!*"

The evening before she had wondered how those three little black marks could image the flame on the hearth. But she recalled them; and in that moment she caught the key of the mystery: the written word not a picture, but an arbitrary sign.

In that instant hope leaped into life. If she could learn one symbol, why not all? Yes; she would master the mystery. Already its fearfulness was vanishing.

"Make it talk more to Canoga!" she cried, with beaming eyes.

Étienne began again to read. Her delight was unbounded. Yes, surely his world was opening.

The medicine was talking to her through his voice, not quite intelligibly, to be sure, for she still knew too little French. But who reverences a comprehended oracle?

He paused and looked into her face. It was that of one rapt in vision. Once and again he would have stopped; she would not let him. Oh, the glory, the power of it!

That night they sang their wonted evening psalm and, kneeling side by side, said "Our Father.' Then she went to her cabin, but not to sleep. Her brain was in a whirl. Was she cheating herself with vain hopes, or had she indeed found the ladder that scaled the dim heights of Étienne's world?

At the same moment, lying on his bed of pine-needles and watching the reflection of the fire flickering on the hearth, he became aware of a change in his feeling about Canoga. What astonishing quickness she had shown! And who would have dreamed of such a craving for knowledge in an Indian? Decidedly, she was a very interesting girl. He had never thought of teaching her anything beyond the Lord's Prayer and a psalm or two. But plainly there were possibilities in this direction. It began to dawn on him that there might be more in common between them than he had imagined possible. He fell asleep saying to himself, "She can be taught to read, and I shall teach her."

The next day was fine, and they spent the morning in spearing fish. Canoga was much preoccupied. Once she turned abruptly and asked, "Etayan, do all the men in your country make the medicine talk?"

He smiled at the quaint form of the question. "Oh, no; only a few."

"And the girls?"

"Some of them."

"The same as the men?"

"Just the same."

Her countenance fell. She had hoped, if she could gain the key of the mystery, which no doubt was a masculine prerogative, to get an advantage over those pale girls beyond the sea. But, at least, they should have none over her. What they could do she would do.

From that moment to learn was her one thought. The rest of the day she was impatient for the evening. So soon as they had eaten their meal, she heaped an armful of pine-knots on the fire. Then, in the ruddy glare, bringing the Bible reverently, she handed it to Étienne and said, half-proud, half-pleading, "Make it talk more to Canoga."

So, evening after evening, the reading went on. It had an amazing fascination for her; and the more she listened the more she caught of the message. Better still, she was learning to read for herself. She hung over Étienne with rapture, picking out her little black friends on the page and calling them by name with delightful familiarity. Then he, smiling, introduced more of the little fellows, and she took good heed of their make-up, that she might be sure of calling their names aright when she should meet them again. Her wildwood habit of living much by the eye served her well.

Canoga's education had suddenly become the ab-

sorbing interest of all the in-door hours. She blessed a rainy day. All the while her vocabulary was increasing fast, both by reading and by speech. A thirst for knowledge consumed her. She must know all that the women of Étienne's country knew. He was puzzled to meet her eagerness and to devise means for imparting the rudiments of his own modest learning. How to teach without books was the problem. He had already utilized sea-sand, spread smoothly on the hearth, for writing-lessons. How merrily Canoga laughed at his surprise when, coming out one bright, crisp morning, he found the Lord's Prayer "writ large" in the sand before his door! She had worked on it, by moonlight, Heavens knows how long, while he slept.

CHAPTER XXII

CANOGA'S WORLD WIDENS

"ETAYAN," Canoga suddenly asked, one day, half turning her head, as she stood in the bow of the canoe, her poised lance in hand, a keen eye on the water, her superb figure clear-cut as a Greek statue against the background of golden sky, a Diana of the New World, "why is the sun hot?"

She was questioning everything. Her mind once aroused, the infantile statements of her people as to the outward order of things had gone into the limbo of discarded things. She must learn her world all over again, and with tireless activity she sought the why and wherefore of everything.

"Because it is a great ball of fire," he answered.

"What keeps it burning?"

"God."

Silence for a while. He had already taught her to know the universal Creator, and she was adjusting her mind to a rational world-order, with a single Being as its source.

Presently, turning half way, her eye still on the water, she began, "Etayan, the sun comes up out of the ocean. But —" Plash! Down flashed her lance. Then, shaking off a floundering sea-trout into the canoe, she turned all the way round and continued

with an air of putting a poser — "water kills fire. Why does not the sea drown the sun?"

Étienne smiled superior and explained that the sun is ever, ever so far beyond the ocean. She looked at him puzzled and questioning. If anybody else had said it she would have doubted.

"I'll make that plain to you, when we go ashore," he said, and she was content.

So soon as they had landed he moulded three balls of clay, of various sizes, suspended them from an overhanging limb, she looking on all the while wondering, and then proceeded to explain the relations of Sun, Earth, and Moon. When he pointed to the middle-sized globe and said, "That is the one we live on," she stared at him in sheer amazement. She had imagined the Earth — and the characteristic landscape of Chicora gave color to the view — a flat disk, with immeasurable ocean all around the rim. But *he* said it, and that was enough.

The rest of the day she was very silent, and Étienne observed her stealing glances at the sun, as if she was trying to realize her new knowledge.

Her question opened up a fresh field. Quite naturally, he bethought him of moulding a larger globe and roughly plotting on it the continents and seas. Then his eager pupil had her first lesson in geography. Wasn't it amazing, delightful!

Her keen joy in learning repaid him so well that he was drawn on to mark off the larger countries and talk a little about them. Rivers she knew about, but mountains were a new and wonderful story. Happily, he thought of illustrating the subject. She

watched him in silence while he heaped up a long ridge of moist sand on the beach, then carefully moulded a peak here and a peak there, valleys between, a deeper one winding the whole length, a shorter ridge there and another here, then elaborated one little spot with crooked lines crossing each other, and ended by drawing with a pointed stick a fine line meandering down the central valley.

"There!" he said, proudly, stepping back and pointing, "See the Pyrenees!" at the same time extending his hand heavenward and suggesting how they towered skyward. "And there is Mount Midi, and there Perdu, and there Maladetta! Yonder is Pau! And here is my home" — his eyes moistening — "where my father is, sweet Lourdes, and by it the dear little Gave rushing down to the sea!"

She clapped her hands gleefully, her heart answering to his feeling. How beautiful in him to take her, the ignorant Edisto girl, into his confidence and to show her his home in that strange world over the ocean!

Still he had his limitations, as she shortly discovered.

One day she had been intently watching the rising tide. Suddenly she asked, "Etayan, what makes the water come up so far and go back so far, every day, every night, never resting, just as I breathe?"

"God."

"But how?" she asked insistently. This easy reference of everything to God did not satisfy her.

It was his turn now to look puzzled. Physical geography had not entered into his education, and

his mind was not, like hers, groping its way in a new world, always on the alert.

"I don't know," he answered frankly. "The moon has something to do with it."

She nodded easily. "I know that. When the moon is round, the water comes all the way up here," indicating a line considerably above the usual high-water mark.

He looked at her in pleased surprise. The coincidence of the spring-tides with the full moon had escaped him, but she had observed it. She was vastly encouraged. Étienne was so much nearer to her: he did not know everything. It gave her increased confidence in herself. Already she was rejoicing in the sense of sharing his world. Now she began to feel herself at home in it, free to range whither her mind would, on its own wings.

All the time her education was taking a wider range. From speaking of the countries on the globe, Étienne was naturally led to tell of their peoples. So Canoga had her first lesson in history. With a sharp stick he traced in the sand an outline of the country under consideration, — France, Greece, Rome, England, as it might be. Then he drew on his memory for such facts as he could recall. He was amazed to find how much, with an eager pupil, he could impart without a book. Many a winter's evening the two spent over one of his outline maps, lighted by the blaze of pine-knots, he telling the story of the country, she hanging on his words with kindling eyes.

But it was when he came to speak of individual characters in history that her interest blazed up like

a fire with fresh fuel heaped on. Human beings, their thoughts, feelings, motives,— these were the supreme things in life, she felt. Étienne was fairly well read in Plutarch. His heroes appealed mightily to her. But of all the personages of ancient or modern story, Joan of Arc had the deepest fascination for her. The career of the peasant girl, her sweetness, her piety, her visions, her triumphs, her tragedy, absorbed her. Again and again she came back to it.

"Etayan," she said one day, "if the wicked English had not burned Joan, what do you suppose would have been her end?"

"Oh! I don't know. I suppose she would have married and lived out her life."

Her face fell. She began to be dimly aware that imagination was not his strong point.

Another day, when she had been long silent, in deep thought, she asked, her brows knit, "Etayan, what do you think of the voices that Joan heard?"

Here was a poser for him. A patriotic Frenchman, he admired the career of the heroic Maid. But he had been reared in the straitest sect of Protestantism, and the taint of Romish marvel, as he conceived it, made him look askance at the religious side of her life. He shook his head. "I don't know. I've never formed an opinion about it."

"I will tell you what I think," she said solemnly, her great eyes wide open, her voice lowered to a tone of awe. "I believe that God had truly chosen her to do His will; and that He was directing her."

Étienne merely shrugged his shoulders and was silent. Whenever they came to the border-land of

mystery, he drew back. His feet must always be on solid ground: she loved to soar on the wings of imagination. He chanced one day to tell her one of Rossignol's romances. She was transported. These old tales appealed to him solely through what was natural and human in them; the magic element repelled him. She, with equal enjoyment of the natural, found intense delight in the marvelous. The story revived for her that world of dreams in which she had lived before her awakening. Christians, she found, possessed tales not unlike those which made up her old religion. Now that she had discarded these as articles of belief, she was able to enjoy them as poetical fiction.

The Bible, however, was her supreme interest. So soon as Étienne had taught her to read in it a little, she mastered familiar passages and read and re-read them till they were stamped on her memory. By the spring she was at home anywhere in it. More, she penetrated to its heart and caught its secret. Étienne tried faithfully to expound to her the elements of the Christian faith, as he had been taught them. But he soon found himself woefully perplexed. How should he explain the sublime mystery of the Trinity, when he could not make it clear to himself? How was he to give her any idea of sin and salvation, repentance and redemption? She had not any consciousness of guilt, and Nature did not suggest any analogies for illustration. His theology crumbled, when he would communicate it in other language than that in which he had received it.

But the central facts of his faith she apprehended

quickly and eagerly. Her great eyes melted with tenderness at the story of the Child of Heaven come to earth to help the needy. With such an illustration before her, how could she doubt it? God's love, under the familiar simile of the sun's life-giving light and heat, was a thought to which her soul leaped forth. This vital germ, once dropped into her mind, from that hour grew, expanded, and filled all her thinking. Born dreamer as she was, a world of poetry slumbering in her soul awakened to life. For her there was no more an inanimate Nature. She lived in a happy world that was all God. She had found the key to puzzles that had perplexed her since childhood: all Nature the body, God the universal Soul. She fairly radiated an inspiring faith. Said Étienne to himself, "I set out to teach her theology. She is teaching me religion."

Spring had come, and the two roamed the woods, fragrant with the scent of jasmine and honeysuckle, gorgeous with the trailing woodbine. Only one cloud now and then darkened Canoga's sky. As summer drew near, Étienne turned his eyes seaward many times a day. "Where are Ribaut's ships?" they plainly asked. In the end she had no need to be disturbed. The summer came and passed, and autumn too. As the days shortened, and the frosty evenings called for a fire on the hearth, she was full of secret joy. "They will not come these many moons," she said to herself.

CHAPTER XXIII

TIDINGS OF WHITE MEN ON THE COAST

THE second winter began, to all outward seeming, like the first. Yet how different! The slim girl of a year ago was bourgeoning into a splendid womanhood. And her spiritual growth outran the bodily. She had absorbed all that Étienne knew, and, stimulated by the new influences pouring in upon her, she lived in an ever widening world that was sealed to him. To her Nature was always whispering some precious secret; to him she was dumb.

He had begun in the attitude of an elder brother. This was no longer possible. The old simplicity of their relations was gone forever. Something was stirring in him, something which Félicie never had aroused and which Marguerite Marcel had but shown to be possible. What beauty he found in her! What grace! What artless charm! How her eyes, shining with inward light, at times thrilled him!

Light-hearted herself and supremely happy in hourly companionship with him who was all the world to her, with not a shadow to darken her sky, she little dreamed of a struggle growing ever fiercer within him. Who could have divined a storm under his calm exterior? As her former superstitious veneration gave way, with her growing sense of sharing his world, to a

more rational admiration for him as the noblest being she could imagine, she had fallen into a playful familiarity that tested his strength to the utmost. The very impression he had made proved his gravest peril.

A checkered time was that winter, for Canoga full of bliss, clouded only by an occasional moodiness in Étienne which to her was unaccountable; for him, alternating between exquisite happiness and cruel conflict. If he were free to follow his heart! But, let him indulge for a moment the dream of a joy that seemed to beckon him, instantly rose the black shadow of Doubt. Lovely as Canoga was, his equal in all things, his superior in many, her blood was alien. How could he forget that fact? Had not the Creator set between her people and his a gulf as wide and deep as the ocean rolling between the continents? Was it not plain that, as some are too near, others are too remote for marriage? Did not the story of Israel teach God's wrath on the chosen people for alliances with women of strange blood? A host of biblical prejudices, begotten of his early training, cried clamorously against the thought of such a union.

The winter went by, and with the spring Étienne's eyes were again turned anxiously toward the ocean, and again the shadow fell on Canoga's face.

The summer had begun when, one day, an Indian was seen driving his canoe with swift strokes of the paddle towards the landing. What did his coming mean? Visitors had grown rare. The natives had come to understand that, somehow, these two young people lived in a world apart. But this man evidently

had a purpose. The bow of his canoe shot up on the beach, and he sprang ashore.

"Canaoa! Canaoa!" he cried to Étienne, spreading wide his arms and flapping them like wings.

Ah, a ship! Where?

Many suns to the southward. White men, bearded men, more in number than the blackbirds in a flock flying overhead. That was the purport of the tidings that had come up the coast. His countrymen had chosen the River of May (the St. John's) for their settlement, Étienne surmised.

For some minutes he continued his questioning. In the tumult of his mind he wanted time to gain some clearness before he should speak to Canoga. His first thought was that he must part from her. In a vague way he had always contemplated such an issue. Now that he was face to face with it, it caused a cruel pang.

With a troubled brow he turned to her. Her face was serene. A cloud that had fallen on it with the visitor's first word had passed. Her first thought, like his, had been, "We must part"; the next, "He will need me for a while yet. He cannot make his way alone. When we reach his countrymen my work will be done. Till then my place is at his side."

"Whither thou goest I will go," she said with a quiet smile.

Étienne could have leaped for joy. "What? Leave your people and travel with me!"

She simply nodded and smiled.

Was he justified in accepting this new sacrifice? Yes, he said to himself. It would save Canoga from

going back to the loathed savage life, and it would keep them longer near each other. It was no chance that had bound their lives together. Who could tell what the future might have in store for her?

So it was settled. They would start on the morrow.

CHAPTER XXIV

"WALKING IN THE MIDST OF THE FIRE."

It was at the dawn of a glorious June morning that Étienne and Canoga set out on their journey from Charles Fort.

As their canoe shot into Broad River, Canoga took a long last look at the dear familiar scene, thinking all the while of Eve, driven from Paradise, turning sad eyes to the Eden that lay forever behind her.

Now the bridegroom came up in his glory out of the ocean, to wed the chaste bride waiting beneath her silvery veil. Everywhere was the golden beauty of morning brooding over calm waters and silent shores.

Down the wide estuary the voyagers sped, the cypress canoe skimming the water as lightly as a bird's wing, while silvery ripples breaking from her bow undulated far on the glassy surface. Soon they sighted, between the Hilton head and Bay Point of our day, the blue Atlantic sparkling in the sunlight. Lying still under God's great hand, Canoga thought, how sublime, how mysterious! For her would it be foe or friend, the grave of her hopes — or what?

Now an opening on the right showed the course which they must take. They turned into it and quickly lost sight of the ocean, following the course

of a creek winding through a wide marsh, sometimes sweeping boldly up to one or the other shore. They were traversing a sheltered water-way, inside of the outer fringe of islands, by which they might journey hundreds of miles along the coast without once entering the open sea.

On they sped between walls of living green until the sun hung almost overhead, and they were hot, thirsty, and weary. A pine-crowned bluff invited them to rest, and they gladly drew the canoe ashore and sought its welcome shade. A tiny brook indicated a spring. They found it, quenched their thirst deliciously, and replenished the great calabash that held their traveling supply. Then they stood a while in silence beneath the shade of the dark, murmuring pines, watching the little fountain welling out of the bosom of the earth, a type of the kind Mother's perennial bounty, then purling on its way.

Canoga seemed lost in reverie. Presently she said, pointing to the rivulet, "See Canoga!"

"You mean there?" Étienne asked, indicating her reflection in the water.

She shook her head. "Hear the little brook's voice. Listen close, Etayan, and you will hear it say,'I am but a tiny rill of sweet water flowing here in the dark woods, all unseen. To-day my heart is light, because I have met and gladdened two friends. It is enough. Now I go my way, singing, to the sea, — to be lost forever.'"

The look in her eyes had deepened to a strange pathos. Étienne stared at her, silent and perplexed, His plummet could not fathom her mood.

They took a long nooning. Étienne, worn out with the exertions of the morning, fell asleep. When he awoke, the shadows were lengthening. If Canoga were here, they might start. Where was she? He strolled quietly along the edge of the wooded bluff, thinking to surprise her asleep.

Suddenly he came upon her, and in another moment he was stealing softly away, blushing guiltily. Ah! the story of Actæon had a new meaning. Diana's dogs rending him were pangs of conscience visiting the modest youth because, in a heedless moment, he had invaded the goddess's privacy.

He slipped back to the place where Canoga had left him.

"Ah, sleepy-head! Are you awake at last?" she cried merrily, coming presently and throwing herself beside him, combing her shining hair that hung, all wet, down her back, "While you have been sleeping like a turtle on a log, I have had a swim, oh! such a glorious swim."

Why did he frown and turn away? Surely, he could not be angry at her little pleasantry.

She laid her hand on his. How cool it was!

Now she knelt beside him. "Have I vexed you?" she asked gently, leaning close to him, her great, soft eyes searching his face with tender appeal.

He shivered, caught his lip between his teeth, and turned away.

She drew back, hurt. What had she done to deserve such treatment? Moody she had seen him sometimes, but never like this. Ah well! it was but the beginning of the end, she said to herself.

She rose and busied herself with preparations for departure, while he sat with face averted, taking no apparent heed of her. Presently she said, low and sadly, "All is ready. Shall we start, Etayan?"

So they silently took their places in the canoe and pushed off.

Poor girl! The sun shone for her again when, after a while, he made some commonplace remark.

They made their camp on a little island surrounded by marsh except on the side washed by the creek. It contained but a few square yards of dry land, overgrown with dense shrubbery, over which towered a solitary palmetto. There was no water but the supply which they had brought in their great calabash. While she kindled the fire and cooked their meal, he chopped bushes and quickly made a rude shelter.

The problem of the night's lodging did not embarrass her an instant. When they had eaten their supper, she made a little fire in the middle of the hut, then smothered it with damp sedge, which made it pour out a dense cloud of white smoke that hung overhead.

It seemed to Étienne like the naked sword that, in the old romances, knights were wont to lay between themselves and their ladies. A more prosaic object was in Canoga's mind, — to drive out mosquitoes.

So, when they had knelt together and said their evening prayer, they laid them down, on either side of the smudge.

Watching the white smoke rolling out in heavy folds, then mounting in a dense column to form a canopy, he said to himself, "It shall be to me as the pillar of fire to the Hebrews, a symbol of God."

But, sooth to say, there was another presence quite as insistent as the Divine, and more directly in evidence. Even the most prosaic nature would have felt the poetry of the situation, — the tiny hummock in the wide marsh, like a ship in mid-ocean; the dim, vast, brooding night; the rustle of the palmetto-fronds; the plaintive cry of a solitary bittern. But Étienne was in no mood for sentiment. He was in the grip of an unseen, insidious foe. The devilish witchery of the night was stealing over him like a living creature, steeping him in a sensuous languor. It stung his blood and made his pulses throb. It infected his brain with burning images.

Oh! the miserable accident of the afternoon! How persistently that picture in the sunlit woodland came back and would not be banished!

And she there — he fancied he could hear the rise and fall of her bosom as she breathed — within reach of his arm, that ached to clasp her!

So he lay in the darkness and silence, listening to the rustle of the palmetto-fronds breathed upon by the night, the bittern's lonely cry, and the throbbing of his heart beating wildly with its guilty secret.

He would fain steel himself with pride. Should an accident conquer reason? Should he let these elemental forces master him with their sudden uprising? Struggle as he might, still the soft southern night mocked his will with its insidious wooing.

He sought to brace himself with arguments of reason, to fortify himself with scraps of Scripture. He rehearsed to himself the story of God's wrath on the lust of the eyes, when Israel's wanton king from the

roof of his palace beheld beautiful Bathsheba unrobed and conceived a base treachery. "Thou art the man!" he seemed to hear the prophet cry.

Still came the languorous breath of the night, heavy with opiates for conscience, murmuring, "Alone you two in all the world!" Still Nature within, turned traitor, conspired with Nature without, whispering cunning counsels.

It seemed he must stifle in this infernal conflict. Could he hold his own through the dreadful night?

"Yes — if I die!" he said to himself, setting his teeth grimly.

Hush! What was that? Surely it was a sigh from Canoga. The impulse to smother it with his lips, to fold her in his arms, almost mastered him. But resist he must. He dared not so much as utter a word, like an Alpine traveler holding his breath for fear of precipitating an avalanche. A single sigh of sympathy, the faintest yielding to the storm within — he durst not trust himself on the perilous venture.

Yes, it was a sigh from Canoga. She too lay awake, sad and lonely. To her the voices of the night came only with sombre warning. The rustling fronds whispered, "Prepare, Canoga! Be brave, for the end is at hand!"

Since they had left the scene of their idyl she had a feeling that every stroke of the paddle widened the gulf between her and Étienne. When his people should be reached her life's sun would be set.

What was this nameless influence that had come between them that day? Was it not a shadow of the approaching end? Loneliness wrapped her like a

cold mist. Could she but lay her head on his bosom just once and feel his arms about her — then die! But no! There he lay, awake — she was sure of that — steeled in his cold reserve, when a touch of his hand, a friendly word, even a sigh, might soothe the dull aching of her heart.

"Cold! Oh, so cold!" she said to herself, and her breath escaped in a sob. Then she flushed hotly, because he must hear it. The next moment she shivered because he paid no heed. So near, and yet so far! What was he thinking of, lying there in his proud indifference? Of his countrymen surely; it might be, of some pale girl over the seas.

But he should never know her heart's hunger. She would brave it out without a sign. Octlan's heroic blood was in her veins, and the traditions of her race all made for fortitude.

So the stars moved on their solemn courses, the fronds overhead shivered, and the wide night enfolded the lonely hummock where Canoga kept the faith with a heavy but brave heart.

At last his measured breathing told her that Étienne was asleep. Then she rose and softly replenished the smudge. After a while she too slept.

When he awoke the next morning the sun was shining brightly, she was busy about the fire, and the breakfast of dried fish and hominy was ready.

"Thank God! it is over!" he said to himself, shuddering at the memory of the night's struggle. With the daylight had come saneness and safety.

CHAPTER XXV

LIGHT THAT NEVER WAS ON SEA OR LAND — AND DARKNESS

AFTER that perilous night high peace reigned in the little camp. Surely it was well won. Was not Étienne a true Siegfried, Peace-Conqueror?

So it was that the two voyaged on in tranquil delight. Because his soul was at rest, he was happy; and because he was happy, she was supremely happy. What mattered the cloud on the horizon? Bravely she put from her every boding thought, resolved while yet the sun shone to give herself wholly to their common joy and make every moment bright for both. Never had she shown so winning qualities. She not only threw herself into all his moods, but seemed to look at the world through his eyes. She stimulated him by her mere presence, so full was she of an intensity of life.

So they fared on, day by day, these two guileless young souls, weaving, all unknowing, the threads of destiny. Now their canoe skimmed over waters sparkling under the morning sun. Then they rested during the noonday heat in shadowy groves beneath ancient oaks garlanded with swaying festoons. Or they roamed under the murmuring canopy of stately pines and made the dim forest glades ring with Christian

song, or loitered like happy children on some sea-beach gathering shells. At evening, sitting by their camp-fire and watching the skies, they talked of ancient seers keeping vigil on Chaldean plains, and Étienne told all that he knew of the heavens and pointed out Orion and the Pleiades and fitful Algol and Bernice's Hair, with its mystic story. Then they sang their evening hymn, knelt side by side for prayer, and laid them down in peace.

It was a wonderful time. Earth and sky, woods and waters, seemed leagued to enfold these two pure spirits in mute friendliness. They fared through an enchanted world steeped in a light that never was on sea or land, musical with mute melody.

The gods of high Olympus, beholding, would needs have envied and despaired. Angels of the Christians' Heaven, hovering over with hushed wings, might have fancied the sinful centuries an evil dream, and themselves still listening to Adam and Eve talking in Paradise.

If, in the daytime and in association with Étienne, Canoga seemed preternaturally bright, she paid the price in many a lonely hour of the night.

He was vaguely aware of some strong feeling in her that kept her keyed up to an unusual pitch. Still he did not suspect the sombre undercurrent beneath her outward cheerfulness. He never dreamed that often while he slept she lay awake listening to the murmur of the sea or to the night-wind sighing in the tree-tops, each whispering some mournful presage. Still less did he imagine her hanging over him, noiseless as the air, reverent as a nun.

He got withal occasional glimpses of stern stuff in her. They often had need to visit some village to replenish their stores. On these occasions she bore herself with a dignity that marked the difference between herself and the patient drudges of her race. Once a chief's wife, stung, perhaps, by a sense of the distance between herself and this queenly girl, laughed when Canoga referred to Étienne as her "brother." She turned upon her, and, without a word, her eyes flashed such a look of withering scorn that its object hung her head.

They had come to the last evening of their voyage. They had met people who had visited the strangers, and they knew that within a few hours they would be with Étienne's countrymen. Now they stood on a beach, looking out on a moon-lit sea.

For all the quiet beauty before his eyes, Étienne was preoccupied and sad. The approaching change cast its shadow over him. The beautiful idyl was surely about to end. Let the future bring its best, could they two ever be so happy again? Then his thoughts ran on beyond what lay immediately before them. What of Canoga and himself in years to come? All lay in darkness. And this uncertainty depressed him. He could not hide from himself that his life was bound up with hers.

His cloud had no silver lining. Together, there would be the misery of a hopeless love, banned by Heaven: parted, the anguish of separation.

He heard something like a stifled sigh at his side. He turned to Canoga. Her bosom was heaving, her features tense with strong emotion. He had never seen her so moved.

"What troubles you, Canoga?" he cried.

She smiled, with quivering lips, struggling bravely to be mistress of herself.

"What is it, my sister?" he cried, seizing her hand.

Unfortunate word, "sister!" Not a world of brotherly love could have satisfied her heart.

She wrenched her hand loose and walked briskly away.

He followed, crying, "What is it, dear? Won't you tell me?"

She only shook her head and hurried on, endeavoring to control herself and ashamed of her weakness.

The trouble, held back so long, had overpowered her at last. Like Étienne, only far more, she felt the menace of the coming change. Looking out on the moon-lit sea and hearing its contented murmur as it lapped the shore, she felt an awful loneliness. What were all human pains and sorrows in the presence of inexorable Nature!

She had turned for solace to Étienne. Alas! his eyes were fixed on the ocean far away. Thinking of what? Of whom? Oh! she could guess. Of Lourdes sleeping in the moon-light. Before the eyes of her imagination the little hamlet rose, as he had pictured it to her. She saw its high, antique houses, with their narrow casements. She saw, too, a fair girl with golden hair — he had spoken of one — sitting by a window, her eyes on the moon, her thoughts with a lover beyond the ocean. Then it was that she gave way.

Now off she hurried, heedless of his calls, and threw herself on the sand in the hollow between two dunes.

After a while a revulsion came. She was grieved

at having rebuffed Étienne. How little he deserved such treatment from her, to whom he had opened the higher world! Was it not more than she could have dreamed, to be a sister to him, to serve him with all her heart and soul and life so long as she might?

She rose and went slowly, very sorrowful and contrite, to the camp. The fire was but a feeble glow, and he was not there.

Where was he? She threw on fresh fuel and sat waiting, eager to confess her fault. But he came not. An hour passed. She went out and looked for him where they had parted. He was not there. Another hour. Then she went out again.

"Etayan!" she called, at first low, doubting not that he was near by, then louder, and still louder, "Etayan! Etayan!"

No answer came but the soft lapping on the shore and the derisive hooting of an owl.

She went back, heavy-footed, to the camp, replenished the fire, and still watched, full of a sickening fear. Had he come to some harm?

Another hour dragged by. Then she went out and called again in a voice that broke into a wail. No answer still, only the eternal murmur of the sea.

"Etayan! Etayan!" again she cried, half choking. Was he angered and keeping silence because she had been rude?

No; he was not near. Happily for both, he did not hear that dear voice, tremulous with feeling; happily, he did not come to her, when her heart was overflowing with penitence and tenderness, and his own hungered for her.

In the wan light of early dawn, as she sat, with drooping head, by the fire, still keeping her troubled watch, she heard a step and looked up. It was he! She started up with a little joyful cry. Another moment and she would have been in his arms. But a gesture and a certain look in his hollow eyes warned her off. He seemed weary to death, threw himself on his couch of skins, and soon slept.

He had wandered miles away, pacing the beach, sometimes throwing himself on the sand for a while. He had half guessed the cause of Canoga's emotion, and he dared not trust himself near her in the perilous intimacy of their lodging. If her heart was crying to his, as his to hers, could he lie calmly by her side and make no sign? He would not for any price repeat the wretched struggle of that first night of their voyage.

When he awoke from a heavy sleep, broad daylight was about him. Canoga, silent and self-contained, moving noiselessly about, had prepared their breakfast.

It seemed his pleasure to ignore the incident of the previous night; and she accepted his will. With their usual demeanor, they ate their meal, then broke their last camp and took their places in the canoe.

The idyl was ended. In a few hours they would be with Étienne's countrymen. The golden time had passed like a sweet dream that neither might recall.

CHAPTER XXVI

A SERIES OF SURPRISES

A HOT July sun poured its fierce rays upon Fort Caroline, the post newly planted by Laudonnière and his companions near the mouth of the St. John's River. They had been now some weeks in New France and were fast pushing their works to completion. A palisade on the water-side and two bastions had been finished, cannon had been planted, quarters for the men reared, and the limp fleurs-de-lis hung over a busy scene filled with the sound of axe and saw and hammer, of spade and shovel.

The only idlers on the ground represented the two social extremes, those who had learned too little to work, the Indians, a group of whom lounged about, stolidly watching the industrious Frenchmen; and those who had learned too much to work, the gentlemen. Of these latter a party sprawled lazily in the shade of tall pines on a bluff overlooking the river, grouped around their leader.

This was none other than Bertrand de Briancourt. We last saw him, after the ghastly experiences of the homeward voyage, making his way towards Lourdes.

Arrived there penniless, ragged, and hollow-eyed, he told a story of disaster which lost nothing of its interest from the fact that it was embellished with

vivid touches drawn from his fertile imagination. His account of Étienne was that, against positive orders, he strayed away from the post and was never seen again, having undoubtedly fallen a victim to the growing hostility of the Indians.

As Briancourt happily phrased it, "Most likely some of them had encountered him alone in the woods and had seized him, marched him to one of their villages, tied him to a tree and danced around him, then built a slow fire at his feet and roasted him."

This tale quickly traveled from the château to the village, and brought the terrified old minister, Pastor Cazenove, to hear with his own ears the story of his son's disappearance. To him Briancourt, with cool effrontery, related his ingenious fabrication, softening it somewhat.

"Tell me, Monsieur de Briancourt," broke in the old man, his voice quavering pathetically, "what you think — has befallen — my son?"

He detested this house of Briancourt, that never came to preaching, never showed any religious interest in Protestantism, yet brazenly marched under its banner. But now, in his distress, he looked appealingly to this young seigneur, as if he were the very arbiter of his son's fate.

"I dare not offer you any encouragement, Pastor Cazenove," said Briancourt with seriousness, even he touched by the old man's trouble. "I fear he has been killed."

"Oh, I cannot believe it!" cried the old minister. "God is too good to let him die thus. Why should

anybody kill my boy? He never wronged a human being."

Briancourt shrugged his shoulders and kept silence. Such fatuous piety was beyond the reach of argument.

Then the poor old man went away, to gain in prayer renewed trust, while all around him his people showed by their looks that they believed his boy dead.

Two other persons nearly concerned in Étienne's fate were very differently affected by Briancourt's story.

Matthieu Bellange, the miller, a grim, dour man, with deep-set, stony eyes, a true index of his hard Basque nature, had ill borne young Cazenove's departure for the wars. It was, in his opinion, but a bit of silly, boyish enthusiasm, and his father showed himself a weak old man in allowing it. If the youth never should return, who was to marry his daughter and realize the dream that had filled his thought since the two children played together? Now his sullen rage against the minister almost burst out. Keeping it in check outwardly, he still betrayed it by an increased sternness towards the poor old man, to whom, though once his familiar adviser in worldly matters, he now rarely spoke a word.

On the other hand, his daughter Félicie bore the strain of suspense as to Étienne's fate with a composure that amazed the villagers, long accustomed to think of her as his destined bride. Ill-natured persons even doubted whether she cared.

It may be that she found some solace in the nearness of Briancourt. She had long had a furtive acquaintance with him which had culminated, on the

eve of his departure, in a scene in which she responded to his bold love-making with more feeling than she would have imagined that she could show.

One day, about a week after his return, he suddenly appeared, as she was busy with her flowers. So changed was he, with his hollow, tanned cheeks and sunken eyes, his shabby old finery hanging loose on his lean limbs, that her manner betrayed a deep interest which her indifferent words could not hide.

Briancourt was too keen a student of womankind not to note the favorable signs. But he got no further. As weeks, and then months, went by, and with returning health his old audacity came back, at each interview he sought to gain some ground. In vain. Once, to sound her, he spoke with pretended sympathy of Étienne's fate. Her face hardened curiously, and she turned away to her flowers. For that day she had nothing more to say. At another time he hazarded a proposal that she meet him in the woods. A scornful look, as she turned away, was her only reply. It was some time before he regained his former footing, and then only on the promise never again to offend in that manner.

Thus a year passed, and still he made no progress. He could not get beyond the casual intercourse which a grand seigneur might without public scandal hold with the daughter of a miller. Signs of her interest were not wanting, but it was scant satisfaction to feel that he had gained her affections. He was no sentimentalist, and hearts were not his game.

"What," he asked himself a thousand times, "stands in my way?"

He had made one egregious error. He had not reckoned with Félicie's master motive, pride. This stood her in better stead than unaided virtue has stood many a better girl. He did not dream what satisfaction she found in her romantic situation as the bereaved fiancée of the pastor's son, and how it delighted her that her name and Étienne's were linked together in the village talk. Undoubtedly, had she asked herself categorically whether she loved Briancourt, she would have answered, "No." For Love, as she saw him, was a rosy little god in fine raiment walking smilingly hand in hand with Plutus.

Yet there were times when her vagrant fancy flew far away from Lourdes, from her grim father and inane mother, from the little conventicle and the preaching, from all the surrounding narrowness, to a bright world where the Ten Commandments were obsolete, but music and flowers, love and laughter, wine and song were perennial. By her side through that enchanted realm walked Briancourt, not the broken young noble, shabby, penniless, and sullen, who hung about with his eternal protestations of love, but Briancourt rich and crowned with success.

After a while the truth began to dawn upon him. "Curse the mercenary little jade!" he said to himself, raging at his poverty. "If that old fool at home had not beggared me, to marry my brother to a Montalembert, I should have had her by this time."

Then came a letter that met his mood. René de Laudonnière, who had sailed with Ribaut to America and had returned with him, proposed planting a colony at the mouth of the St. John's River. He had

heard of his former comrade's return, and now he wrote tendering him a place. What an opportunity! The mines of Apalachee beckoned Briancourt. He jumped at the offer, hastened to join the expedition, and sailed a second time for the New World.

Now that Laudonnière's expedition was safely landed, and the works begun, there was little for the gentlemen to do, in the long, hot days, but listen to Briancourt, whose experience of the country, added to his natural gifts, made him their leader.

This morning he had been regaling his hearers with the story of the mutiny at Charles Fort and the marooning and undoubted death of young Cazenove.

When he had finished his tale, shading his eyes, he fixed them on a canoe coming up the river, in which two persons were seated.

"Mordieu!" he presently exclaimed. "That fellow is provident. He evidently knows that womenfolk are scarce hereabouts, for he brings his girl with him."

"Not so! Those are two men," said another.

A warm discussion ensued, some taking one side, some the other.

Meanwhile the canoe had come nearer, and it was seen that Briancourt was correct. In the bow sat a young Indian woman, in the stern a young man.

"Pardiou!" cried a youth in broad Gascon speech, "Let us go down and see this redskin gallant and his fair companion. He's a bold fellow, Briancourt, to bring her where there are such lady-killers as you."

"Or you, Bléloc, for whom they say a half-dozen dusky maids are tearing each other's hair."

"Pardiou! you put it too strongly, Briancourt,"

laughed the flattered Adonis, twirling the ends of a nascent mustache. "Only four, as I live; and that is a lawful number. The Koran allows four wives to a pious Mussulman, and surely we are as good as Turks in this pagan country."

The party had sauntered within a few yards of the landing, when the bow of the canoe shot up on the beach, and the young woman leaped lightly ashore.

"Nom de Dieu! What an ankle! What a shape! Here's a splendid prize," cried Briancourt; and all the giddy crew laughed.

Canoga turned, drew herself up proudly, and fixed the speaker with a glance of queenly scorn.

Indeed she had grown into a superb creature, taller than the average woman of her race, robust, straight as an arrow. Her fine head, lifted scornfully, was airily poised on a neck as shapely as a dove's. Like that of the Indian bride in Longfellow's "Baron of St. Castine,"

> "The gold-bronze color of the skin
> Seemed lighted by a fire within,
> As when a burst of sunlight shines
> Beneath a sombre grove of pines,
> A dusky splendor."

Her oval face and her delicately chiseled features gave her an air of distinction. Now her great, black eyes, usually soft and tender, blazed with angry light.

She had put on her most becoming attire for this meeting, to honor Étienne's countrymen. Her broad, low brow was spanned by a fillet of pearls, keeping in place a mass of glossy black hair which, parted in the middle, was swept back and gathered in two heavy

braids hanging, entwined with variegated sea-shells, below her waist. An outer garment of the finest doe-skin, ornamented with various devices in color, fell almost to her ankles. These were bare, while moccasins protected her feet. This pristine garb gave full play to the freedom of her movements and took nothing from their grace and dignity. She walked a princess, stamped with Nature's patent of royalty.

Étienne rose quickly, leaped ashore, and advanced swiftly toward the speaker.

The giddy young Frenchmen, engrossed in observing the young woman, had not noticed her companion. Now they saw that he was plainly not an Indian. He was bare-headed and wore garments of buckskin, but his features were Greek in mould; his fine, black hair, hanging in long waves on his shoulders, was not dressed in Indian fashion; and his face, deeply tanned by exposure, was of a different hue from the red-brown of the Indian. His eyes were noble, his figure firm and well-knit, and he was the very picture of an athletic youth hardened by exercise. The years of simple woodland life had done wonders for him.

He made straight for Briancourt, while the astonished group parted before him.

"Coward!" he cried, slapping him full in the face with his open hand. "You would not have dared this insult, had you not seen that I am unarmed."

At the sound of his voice Briancourt turned livid and recoiled a few paces. Could it be?

The next instant he recovered himself, instinctively drew his sword, and advanced, still pale, but furious.

"Ah! You attack an unarmed man! It is worthy

of you," cried Étienne, standing his ground. Then addressing Briancourt's friends, he asked, "Is there a gentleman among you who will lend me a sword?"

Not a hand moved, not a voice spoke.

"Like master, like men," he said, scornfully surveying the scowling circle. "As for you, Monsieur de Briancourt, we will adjourn this contest only until I can obtain a weapon. All the Frenchmen at this post surely are not such mongrels as these." This with a gesture of contempt flung in their faces.

"Here is a sword at your service, Monsieur," said a quiet voice at his elbow.

The speaker, sauntering near, had been attracted by the singular scene. He was LeMoyne, the artist of the expedition, some of whose pictures we are privileged to reproduce in this volume.

Étienne took the proffered weapon and, without more ado, crossed swords with Briancourt. In an instant the latter knew that he had a formidable antagonist. As he attacked with fury, stung with humiliation and confident in his skill, he encountered a frame hardened by exercise, nerves of steel, and perfect self-control, whereas he had himself been considerably shaken by the startling recognition.

The moral elements of the conflict were all on the side of the younger man. He met the savage onset of his assailant with masterful coolness, parried every thrust, and suddenly taking the aggressive, plied him with relentless vigor.

Briancourt's satellites were dismayed, while his opponent's solitary backer looked on, smiling serenely, and the Indians, gathered around their country-

woman, watched the fight in silent wonder. Who was this stranger in garb like their own who was beating a Frenchman with his own weapon?

Scores of men working on the fort flung down their tools, ran to the spot, and formed an outer ring. Who was this bold fellow, was the question on every one's tongue. He had the sympathy of the crowd. Presently he sent a swift thrust that Briancourt narrowly avoided by a movement of the body, and that passed through his arm.

"Ha! he has it!" "Brave fellow!" cried one and another.

"Blood! Blood! Stop the fighting," shouted Briancourt's friends, seeing the crimson stream dripping from his hand and fearing a worse fate for him. But a look in the eyes of both combatants showed that it was a duel to the death.

Briancourt, backing, was defending himself with difficulty against Étienne's determined onset, when a new power appeared.

"Way there!" shouted an officer, bursting through the crowd, with a file of the guard at his heels. "Part these men!"

The guard thrust their pikes and then themselves between the combants.

"Arrest this fellow!"

Two of the guard seized Étienne, who quietly submitted.

"Take me to your commandant," he said. Then, turning, he handed back his sword to LeMoyne with a bow, saying, "Many thanks, Monsieur, for your timely assistance."

"Monsieur de Briancourt," said the officer, deferentially, "what account will you give to the commandant of this breach of discipline?"

"That fellow struck him," Briancourt's satellites cried in chorus.

"For insulting a woman," said LeMoyne.

"An Indian woman!" they answered derisively.

A wrangle followed and was ended by the officer's bidding Briancourt report to the commandant in person, while he led Étienne off to the guard-quarters to await the good pleasure of his superior.

"Sapristi! But he's a fine fellow," said an old soldier, looking admiringly at the stalwart youth as he marched away between the files of the guard. "But who the devil is he? He's come among us as if he had dropped from the clouds."

"That's it," said another. "Who the devil is he? White men are supposed to be as scarce hereabouts as white elephants."

"By the Lord!" growled a third, "I'd give a gold louis — if I had it — for every drop of that Briancourt's blood that he drew. Didn't he clip the cockerel's comb handsomely!"

Meanwhile Canoga had been standing by, a silent witness of the whole episode. Now she went to the canoe, calmly gathered up bow and arrows and camp utensils, with a bundle of robes, and walked away with her countrymen.

The garrison prison consisted of a rude building of stout puncheons, having an outer room for the accommodation of the guard, and an inner one, unlighted and bare, for the detention of offenders. Of this

Étienne happened to be the only occupant. He threw himself on the ground and awaited the expected summons into the presence of the commandant.

It did not come, and as the sultry afternoon passed by, he was dozing when he heard a deep voice singing. At the first sound he started and sat bolt upright. As the singer came nearer, he sprang to his feet and searched for a crevice through which he might look out. When the man passed, his deep voice rolling out

"Mais où est le preux Charlemagne?"

he leaped to the door, pounded on it with his fist, and cried to the astonished guard, "For Heaven's sake, call that man here!"

The singer promptly came. When the guard threw open the door of the inner room, he gazed, bewildered, for an instant at the strange figure habited in Indian garments standing in the half-light.

"Roland!" cried the stranger.

"My son!" the singer replied, and the two fell into each other's arms.

CHAPTER XXVII

HONI SOIT QUI MAL Y PENSE

ÉTIENNE was released, at Rossignol's instance, on the condition, to which Briancourt also was bound, that they would not renew their strife. At the first he objected to such terms.

"I am not subject," he said, "to Laudonnière's orders. I did not come here under him. I am only a visitor at this post."

"You have no choice," Rossignol returned. "He is the King's representative. There is no power here but the military, and if you want to be counted as a Frenchman, not as a renegade, who has left his countrymen for savages, you must enroll yourself as a member of this garrison."

Rossignol was crafty in putting the matter so strongly. He very well knew that, unless Étienne acquired the rights of a soldier by joining the force, Briancourt's satellites would have no compunction about falling upon him, at the first opportunity, and killing him.

His argument seemed conclusive. Étienne accepted it, was released, and enrolled himself as a soldier of Laudonnière's command.

The two friends at once set out for the Indian village to look after Canoga. On the way Rossignol gave an outline of his experiences since they parted.

After his recovery, the Marcels would not hear of his going away, no doubt correctly surmising that the peace had left him without employment. One tie which bound them all together was grief for the loss of Étienne. Therefore, when he heard of Laudonnière's expedition fitting out for Florida, Rossignol jumped at the opportunity, offered himself, and was gladly accepted. The conviction had been growing in his mind that Étienne was not dead, and he came to the New World with the fixed purpose of finding him, if he was alive. When Étienne arrived at Fort Caroline, he had gone to the Indian village to secure a guide, and he had just then returned.

They found Canoga enjoying that hospitality which is universal among her people. With pride and affection Étienne introduced her to his comrade.

"Canoga is happy to greet Etayan's friend of whom he has spoken so often," she said, in pure French, bowing with dignity, while she extended her hand with a sweet smile.

Rossignol was amazed, and his wonder grew as he found himself talking with her on the same footing as if with an educated woman of his own race. They parted like old friends.

"What a noble girl!" he exclaimed, when they came out. "Why, my boy, she would be at home among the most refined women of any country. Tell me what magic has transformed a heathen savage into such a glorious creature."

"The simple magic of eternal truth acting on a noble nature."

"But how was the development begun? Tell me

how you came to know her and to be associated with her. It surely is a rare story."

Étienne told of his first meeting with Canoga, of her interest in him, of his flight, and of her coming to his rescue, with all that followed. As he pictured their sweet and happy life, and described how hungrily she had devoured knowledge, how the Bible had been her only book, her friend and inspirer, and how her nature had expanded and bloomed in the light she drew from it, his eyes kindled.

"All the while Rossignol watched him keenly. "Dear innocent fellow!" he mused. "Here is as sweet an idyl as ever the sun shone on. And he is utterly unconscious of it! Alas! it is pitched too high for the common man." Turning to Étienne, his great eyes alight with admiration, he said, "You are the Sir Galahad of New France."

"No, no! Do not say that, I beg you," Étienne cried earnestly.

"Why not?" Rossignol asked, surprised.

"He moves on a level far, far above me. Moreover, he is not even my ideal."

"Who is?"

"Launcelot."

"What? Launcelot, with his guilty love for Guinevere!"

"Yes! Launcelot, who was not exempt from the common lot of man; Launcelot, who sinned greatly, but who, also, was great in his expiation."

"You are right, my boy!" the other cried, seizing his young friend's hand in his mighty grasp. "You have voiced what I feel. It is not Galahad who is

the hero of those old legends. He is not a man, but a bloodless shape, flitting ghostlike through that monkish dream, the Quest of the Holy Grail. The singers of that day created him as a concession to the Church. Their love, the world's love, goes not out to him. Who can love a phantom?

"In Launcelot behold a man! A man for the world's love, not less than for its admiration! He strides across the stage a real human being, hot red blood pulsing through his veins, great in every act, great in his transgression, greatest in his atonement. Only for Launcelot, not for Arthur himself, could that noble lament of Sir Hector have been spoken: 'Ah, there thou liest, Sir Launcelot! Thou were the curtiest knight that ever beare shield; and thou were the truest friend to thy lover that ever bestrood horse; and thou were the truest lover of a sinful man that ever loved woman; and thou were the kindest man that ever strooke with sword; and thou were the goodliest person that ever came among presse of knights; and thou were the meekest man and the gentlest that ever eate in hall among ladies; and thou were the sternest knight to thy mortall foe that ever put speare in rest.'"

"Splendid!" cried Étienne, with flashing eyes.

"Yet Galahad you shall be to me always," said Rossignol, looking at him with affectionate pride, "Launcelot in spirit, Galahad in deed."

A few days later, applying to Pastor Chandieu to baptize Canoga, Étienne experienced a shock that justified Rossignol's apprehensions. He had already noticed the minister's cold manner. This he was not

at a loss to account for. Briancourt, he knew, had circulated a story that he was a mischief-maker at Charles Fort and had escaped lightly with banishment.

Now his proposal gave the minister an opportunity he much desired. When Étienne referred to Canoga as his "sister," he burst out scornfully, "Your sister! Young man you should use that sacred word more carefully."

Before Étienne could recover from his painful surprise the other broke into a torrent of reproaches.

"Your shameless conduct," he concluded, "can be expiated only by separating yourself wholly from this girl, who without doubt has bewitched you with her heathen sorceries. As for her baptism, it is not to be dreamed of. Let her first in her life renounce the Devil and all his works."

As Étienne listened he had grown very pale. When the other had finished he said, with a strong effort to be calm, "Sir, will you hear a statement of the facts of the case?"

"Go on," said Chandieu, brusquely.

"When I was cast out," Étienne began, "by the garrison of Charles Fort —"

"For mischief-making and stirring up discord," the other broke in.

"It is a lie!" Étienne flung back, his head high and his eyes flashing. "I appeal to Monsieur Rossignol whether my only offense was not my standing by our captain when he was attacked by assassins, one of whom was your informant."

"Very well. Go on," said Chandieu, coldly.

Étienne rapidly told the story of his rescue by Canoga at Charles Fort.

"You should have sent her away at once," said the minister decisively.

"What? Send away my only friend, who had saved me from death, when my own countrymen had flung me out to die!" Étienne replied with spirit.

"Better that than the course you have followed. Besides, by your own account you would not have perished. You say the savages were friendly to you. They would have relieved your wants."

"You forget her highest interest. She was learning the truths of religion," Étienne returned.

The minister smiled sardonically. "I advise you to make less reference to such motives."

"Do you mean that I am making a false pretense of religion?" Étienne asked hotly.

The other shrugged his shoulders. "Young man," he said loftily, "it grieves me to see your honored father's son fallen into such an evil life —"

"You will not need to waste your sympathy on me," Étienne interrupted indignantly, " if you will believe the plain truth."

"It is the plain truth that condemns you," the minister retorted. "You came to this place alone with a young woman. You have, by your own account, lived with her alone some two years. Then you ask me to baptize her!" He sniffed scornfully, then added, with an air of finality, "Why did you bring her here? That surely was not necessary. A man would have served you better as a guide."

"It was her choice. She would not have had it otherwise, — if I had proposed it."

"Precisely!" Chandieu retorted with a superior smile. "Bewitched, as I have said, you had no will or desire to shake off the spell."

"I think, sir," said Étienne, drawing himself up, "that you abuse the privilege of your office. I wish you to understand that this girl is as dear to me as a sister. Never, so long as I live, will I be parted from her except by her free choice. A world of evil-minded gossips shall not part us. We stand together, come what may."

"As you please, young man," the other answered dryly, and turned away.

Étienne hastened to Rossignol and told him his story, almost choking with indignation.

Rossignol listened quietly, then coolly said, "In his brutal way, the man is right. He has simply judged you and taken his position according to the accepted view."

Étienne started.

"Probably," Rossignol continued, "there are not six men here who think otherwise than he. I actually know of but two, LeMoyne and myself; LeMoyne, because he has a lofty soul, and can conceive of an ideal relation, and I — well, because I have faith in both of you. But I don't know another young man of whom I would believe as much."

Étienne was looking away, pale and frowning. Canoga mistaken for a light-o'-love, and through his heedlessness!

"It is shameful!"

Rossignol shrugged his shoulders. "It is the unavoidable consequence of the situation," he said quietly.

"Do you mean that, under such conditions, such a conclusion would always be drawn?"

"Precisely. People have no way of judging of actual relations but by what they see."

"Then how they must despise me!" Étienne exclaimed, reddening.

Rossignol elevated his eyebrows, smiled into his young friend's flushed face, and said softly, "Quite the reverse!"

Étienne's mind had gone back to the thought of Canoga's false position. "What am I to do about it, Roland?" he demanded vehemently. "This is not to be endured. Canoga must not longer be misjudged. I would sacrifice anything to shield her. What can I do?"

"There is but one way. You must consult appearances. Give up, once for all, the notion that, because you know yourself innocent, therefore everybody else knows it. That is not the world's way of judging, least of all where an Indian woman is concerned."

"Well, what am I to do?"

"Never see Canoga alone. When you go to visit her, I can usually go with you. When I cannot, take LeMoyne. It will be a hard discipline. But you must endure it, if you would counteract the mischief that has been done."

"It shall be as you say," Étienne answered gloomily.

From that day he inflexibly carried out Rossignol's suggestion. It was hard measure for him. Canoga's

companionship had been his chief solace amid much that was disheartening in his environment. He had not been long at Fort Caroline before he was sure of approaching disaster. The motley crew of hireling soldiers who would turn their hands to no peaceful industry, of sailors who were more than half pirates, and of turbulent nobles, each of whom fancied himself an embryo Cortes, only awaiting his chance to subdue kingdoms, were running the same course of folly as at Charles Fort, the same chafing under discipline, the same demand for adventure and conquest, the same strifes within the garrison, and the same brutal bad faith towards the Indians.

The rumor of Pastor Chandieu's insulting attitude towards Étienne got abroad and greatly increased his popularity. "The idea," the men said, "of making such a pother about a trifle like that! Soldiers can't be saints. Think of Condé and the rest of them at home! Chandieu would not dream of taking one of them to task in that fashion. The truckling old fool!"

Étienne, happily, knew nothing of this feeling. The coarseness of the camp revolted him, and the rôle of a popular tribune was not attractive. Besides, he was for law and order. Laudonnière. though Étienne's enemies had his ear, might count on him for support as staunch as that he had given to Pierria.

He had been wont to turn with inexpressible relief to the society of Canoga. The rambles they enjoyed together had renewed, in a measure and for a few hours, their former joyous life. Now he must forego this privilege. Worse yet, he could not make any explanation to her.

As Étienne, day after day, came accompanied by Rossignol, Canoga felt his new attitude keenly. The change could have but one meaning. Surely she had ceased to be what she had been to him. But it was nothing new. Had not the sea murmured it, and the trees whispered it, and the wind sighed it, — "*When he finds his people, he will care for you no more*"?

Still she adapted herself to the altered situation with her usual serenity, growing from a light-hearted girl into a grave young woman.

CHAPTER XXVIII

RIBAUT'S MEPHISTOPHELES

ONE afternoon in the second summer of the Frenchmen's stay at Fort Caroline, Étienne was hurrying out alone to the Indian village. Within the fort everything was at a low ebb. Famine, disease, and sedition had done their worst. Outside, the Indians held the post in a state of virtual siege. Only Étienne, whom they still regarded with favor, might pass freely back and forth between their village and the fort.

The only compensation for all this trouble lay in the fact that Briancourt was no longer there. Laudonnière's eyes had at last been opened to his character, and he had surprised and seized him, along with seven others of the worst malcontents, and shipped them to France in a returning privateer.

A brief flash of hope visited Étienne. When the privateer was about to sail, he applied to Laudonnière for his discharge.

"I cannot by any means let you go, Cazenove," was the commandant's decisive reply. "Good men cannot be spared."

"But, Monsieur, I did not come to New France under your orders. I joined here as a volunteer," Étienne pleaded.

It was of no use. The commandant was inexorable. He had the power to keep Étienne and he would.

The most that the poor fellow could do was to send letters home by the privateer, whose captain he begged to find some means of forwarding them to their destination.

More weary months went by, with more of want and misery. Still no supplies from France, not even any tidings. What did this mean? Had civil war broken out again, and was the forlorn little band in Florida forgotten?

Of course, there came the usual desperate resolve: they would build vessels and sail for home. When they barely eked out a wretched existence from day to day, and a roasted snake was an envied dainty, they planned a long voyage over seas! But despair takes no counsel of reason, and so the famished garrison began with feverish haste two little brigantines.

Suddenly came on the scene that gallant and God-fearing knight, Sir John Hawkins, founder of the English African slave-trade, returning, richly laden, from a perilous venture in Spanish waters, full of gratitude to "the Almightie God who never suffereth his Elect to perish."

He had put into the St. John's for fresh water. Seeing the Protestant Frenchmen's misery, his heart warmed to them, though he noted that "some of them would not take the pains to so much as to fish in the river before their doors, but would have all things put into their mouths." He opened his stores, shod the barefoot, clothed the ragged, furnished a supply of food for all, and even offered a free passage home

for the whole force. When this was declined, he sold Laudonnière one of his vessels, the Tiger, taking payment in some of the cannon of the fort.

Then he sailed away, leaving a grateful and happy company to follow shortly.

Now Étienne was going to Canoga on a joyful errand. Though he was wasted by hunger and fever, his wan face was bright.

In the midst of his perplexity as to her had come the thought — a happy inspiration it seemed — of asking her to sail with him and to make her home among his people. Providence seemed to have inextricably interwoven their destinies, and this opening surely was one of its leadings.

Laudonnière had gladly consented to the proposition, delighted at the prospect of carrying to France a single friendly Indian.

Now, full of his happy project, Étienne was speeding to the Indian village as fast as his weak limbs could carry him.

Canoga, overjoyed at his cheerful looks, greeted him with a bright smile.

"Canoga dear," he cried, seizing both her hands, "I am going home!"

A shadow fell on her face.

"And you too!"

The shadow deepened, and she turned away her head, shaking it silently.

What could this mean? He drew her away into the woods, laid his hands on her shoulders, and said, "Now tell me what hinders."

She only hung her head and shook it sadly.

"Tell me," he insisted.

"Your people's ways are not my people's ways," she said stolidly.

"You know our ways sufficiently. You have some other reason, surely. What is it?"

"They would despise me."

"They will love and honor you. You will live a happy life among us."

"It will never be."

At that moment the report of a cannon boomed through the woods.

"Hark!" cried Étienne. "It is the signal for sailing. There is no time for talk. Come with me!"

She shook her head. He argued, pleaded, coaxed, in desperation. All in vain. She was immovable.

A second gun! Strange! What could it mean? He must be gone. Frantic, he seized both her hands, as if he would drag her with him. She wrenched herself loose and fled like a deer into the woods.

To part thus, — perhaps forever!

A third gun! It must be that an enemy was at hand.

Distracted, he hurried toward the fort, to share in the defence, gun after gun all the while roaring through the woods.

When he emerged from the forest, all became plain. It was a salute. French shipping lay in the river, boats plied back and forth, the fort was thronged with newly arrived groups chatting eagerly with the garrison, and knots of women and children strolled along the banks, gazing in wonder at the stately trees and at a few Indians who hung around, by no means rejoiced at the new arrival.

Strangest freak of fortune, Ribaut had come at last!

As he hurried into the fort, Étienne saw a figure that sent a chill to his heart. In the midst of a group of richly dressed young nobles, himself clad in silk and velvet, with deep lace ruffles and plumed hat, stood Bertrand de Briancourt. When he recognized the worn figure in tattered deerskins passing by, a singular smile played over his face. Somehow it associated itself painfully with Félicie, recalling to Étienne that ugly leer which he once saw flicker over Briancourt's features at the sight of the two young people together.

"Where have you been, my boy?" cried Rossignol, coming up. "I have looked for you everywhere. Have you heard the news? Everything is changed! The sailing orders are countermanded. Nobody is to go home but Laudonnière. He is superseded, — some of that devil Briancourt's work, I'll wager. He must have gained the Admiral's ear and filled it with lies. So Laudonnière goes home, but nobody else. Every man is to stay here."

Étienne put his hand to his head with a gesture of pain.

"A devilish time we are going to have," continued Rossignol, "with Briancourt as Ribaut's adviser. He is in high feather, puts on the airs of an oracle, and struts about the fort as if he were the King's Lieutenant. Fine tales, I warrant you, he has told in France."

Rossignol's surmise was correct. Bertrand de Briancourt, on board the privateer that carried him a prisoner to France, had devised a notable scheme for furthering his plans.

First, to be revenged on Laudonnière for expelling

him from Fort Caroline. The captain of the privateer, Briancourt knew, carried despatches from Laudonnière to Admiral Coligny. These must be secured at any cost. He appealed to his fellow-outcasts, all in the same dilemma, and they concerted a plan.

Shortly after their arrival, the privateer's messenger, scarcely started from Bordeaux, was set upon by masked robbers and stripped of his purse and papers. The conspirators then chuckled over Laudonnière's report, which, had it reached its destination, would have hanged them all.

Now it was easy for Briancourt to turn the tables. With forged papers, he presented himself to the Admiral as an envoy secretly sent by the oppressed garrison of Fort Caroline to lay before him their humble complaint against the tyranny and cruelty of Laudonnière, who was charged with purposing to rebel against the King and set up an independent principality in Florida.

His knowledge of affairs at Fort Caroline and his plausible story completely won the Admiral's confidence and convinced him that his informant had rendered invaluable services to the cause. Having communicated to Coligny an ingenious tissue of facts and fiction, including a most damaging report of Étienne, he was dismissed with a commission in his pocket and the assurance that he would shortly be sent for to fill a high position in a new expedition already preparing. Then he betook himself to Lourdes, fortified with the proofs of his success.

Now, in the capacity of Ribaut's trusted adviser, he had come out to Florida for the third time.

So this was the end of Étienne's dream of going home, — to remain at Fort Caroline, subject to Briancourt's orders.

Far into the night brisk fragments of conversation, laughter, and cheerful cries reached him as he lay in his hut. But he was burning with fever.

CHAPTER XXIX

A STORM BURSTS

A FEW nights later Étienne lay in his hut, listening to the raging of a hurricane. He was recovering from the fever, but still weak.

Within a few days stirring events had taken place. Don Pedro Menendez, commissioned by Philip of Spain as Governor of Florida, had appeared off the St. John's in a tall galleon, and, announcing that he had come to rid the country of heretic invaders, had fired on Ribaut's vessels anchored there. After driving them out to sea, he had sailed southward to a bay where he was beginning a settlement, the one which grew into the city of St. Augustine.

Ribaut, having ascertained that the fortifications at this point were barely begun, had determined to hasten thither with all his forces and strike the Spaniards, in the hope of destroying them before they could complete their defenses. Some of his captains objected that it was a too hazardous venture. But he overrode all opposition and gave orders for sailing as speedily as possible. Laudonnière, who vainly protested against such an arrangement, sick himself, was left to hold Fort Caroline with a handful of men, the sick, and the women and children, — an amazing garrison, surely, for a dismantled fort. Étienne's sickness determined his fate.

"Farewell, my lad," said Rossignol, with deep feeling, to Étienne lying in his hut. "God knows whether we shall ever meet again."

It was a wild night. The tall pines swayed and moaned in a fierce gale. The swollen river, covered with foaming crests, broke madly against the sea-wall and sent showers of salt scud to mingle with torrents of rain lashing the huts that sheltered the little garrison and the terrified women and children. Through all came up the river the deep roar of the ocean beating in fury on the shore.

Ah, Heaven! Three days the ships were gone, and this was the third night of the equinoctial storm. How could they possibly escape destruction on the deadly lee-shore?

Étienne had lain awake the greater part of the night, listening to the raging gale and filled with forebodings. Near morning he had fallen asleep. Suddenly he was aroused by a shriek of terror and agony. He sprang to his feet. What was that hoarse murmur of many voices?

"Santiago! Santiago!" Spain's battle-cry, was shouted from hundreds of throats.

He rushed out. In the half-light of early dawn he saw the fort swarming with a dark mass pouring through a breach in the wall and over the rampart.

Menendez had come. Guided by a renegade Frenchman, he had led a picked force of five hundred men for two days through cypress swamps and quagmires and thickets of saw-palmetto. And now he was here, his men drenched and worn and famished, and their powder wet, but grasping their ruthless

steel. A few half-naked soldiers were offering such resistance as they could, while the air was filled with the shrieks of women and children.

"This way, men!" cried Laudonnière, running, in his night-shirt, from his quarters and making for the principal beach. Étienne followed him.

Alas! The little handful of defenders was swept like driftwood before the inrushing torrent. Some were killed on the spot, the rest routed. Étienne received the thrust of a pike in his side. The next moment, following Laudonnière and others, he escaped through a breach, leaped down into the ditch, ran across the open space, and hid in the woods.

And Canoga? To reach her was impossible. The enemy was between him and the Indian village.

While he tore off the sleeve of his shirt and bound up his wound, one of the shivering group of fugitives, all, like himself, half-naked, cried out, "Ah, God! See! They are slaughtering them."

It was even so. Two or three wretched men who had turned back and thrown themselves on the Spaniards' mercy, were butchered on the spot.

The sight was enough to warn the fugitives what they should expect if they surrendered. They turned their faces towards the mouth of the river, where two little French craft lay.

Now struggling through the salt marsh, his naked limbs cut by the rank sedge, now forcing his way through matted vegetation, faint from his recent sickness and loss of blood, Étienne was on the verge of collapse when a boat approached along the shore, sent from one of the vessels to pick up fugitives. He

staggered on, fell into the arms of two sailors wading up to their arm-pits in the rushes, and knew nothing more.

When he awoke to consciousness, he lay in a narrow, dimly lighted place and the heaving and creaking told him he was on ship-board. A great horror seized him. He dragged himself up the campanion-way.

He was on the deck of La Mouette, one of the little vessels that Ribaut had left. The wind had changed, the gale had subsided, and Captain Mallard had hastened to make sail for France. Over the heaving ocean, Florida was a low, dark line.

Canoga was left behind! And Rossignol, where was he?

PART IV

CHAPTER XXX

A PITIFUL HOME-COMING

On a chill day in early winter, when a leaden sky, slowly darkening, overhung a cheerless landscape, Matthieu Bellange stood looking out of the window of his mill, with a countenance that singularly accorded with the dreary aspect of nature. Time had not softened his features. The lines of his face were deeper, his eyes more sunken, and his hollow cheeks exaggerated the broad, square jaws and high cheekbones.

Presently a pathetic, haggard figure, in motley and ill-fitting attire, and with worn, tanned visage and long hair, came slowly down the road. At the sight of the man at the window the wayfarer quickened his pace and came on with a wistful smile on his wan features, while the miller watched him with a look of

surly questioning. Suddenly a gleam of angry recognition lighted his deep-set eyes, as the stranger waved his hand in joyful greeting and made towards him.

With a frightful oath and a scowl he turned quickly away and plunged into the recesses of the mill.

Such was Étienne Cazenove's welcome to the spot which in far lands his imagination had gilded with hues almost heavenly. A sharp pang shot through him, and he caught his breath. What could this mean?

Landing in La Rochelle half naked, penniless, barefooted, and well-nigh famished after his hard voyage on half-rations across the Atlantic, he had found pity and kindness everywhere among his countrymen. The story of the frightful calamity at Fort Caroline and of the fugitives' sufferings touched the hearts of the simple Christian folk. Food, raiment, and entertainment were pressed upon the survivors. But Étienne would not tarry. Weak still, no sooner was he provided with such shoes and clothing as one and another gladly gave, than he took the road for Lourdes. Now he was come, and to such a reception!

Slowly and hesitatingly he went on. With a painful sense of some unspeakable evil, he knocked falteringly at the miller's door. It was opened by Félicie's mother. She stared a moment wonderingly at the strange figure before her, then turned pale and crying, "Ah, my God! is it you?" slammed the door in his face.

He staggered back, and all grew black around him. He turned towards his home. On the way he met villagers who stared, then greeted him with mingled amazement and evident disapproval.

Once or twice he caught sight of others peering at him from behind doors. He walked in his native village gazed at as if he were an escaped madman.

He entered his home unannounced and lifted the latch of his father's study. The minister, pitifully bowed, worn and gray, looked an instant in wonder at the uncouth figure before him, then opened his arms, crying, "Oh, my son! My son!" A flood of tears choked further speech.

When he had somewhat recovered, he sobbed out, "Oh, my child, I have mourned for thee. How I have longed for this hour! Now God be praised that He has brought thee back to me!"

Étienne, speechless with joy, clasped his father in a long embrace.

Presently the elder exclaimed, "If I had had but a letter!"

"What, Father! Did you not receive a letter from me? Last year?"

"Not a line, my son."

"I wrote you one and sent it by the captain of a privateer returning from New France. I explained that I was detained against my will. I gave it, with one to Félicie, to the captain of the privateer, the same, by the way, who brought home Bertrand de Briancourt. Ah! Did he come to Lourdes last year?"

"He did, indeed, my son," replied the father, shaking his head gloomily.

"Then I surmise what happened. The captain gave him my letters to deliver and he destroyed them."

A new light broke on the minister.

"Surely that is it!" he cried. "Villain! Ah, I

knew well that he lied when he told me, with his smiling face, that you had sent no letter, no message, that you showed no interest in the sailing of a ship for home, and — and all the rest of his infamous story."

"What was that, Father?"

"About an Indian girl with whom he said that you made a long journey alone."

"He said truly."

The father gasped and stared at his son in dismay and horror.

"Can it be, Father, that you thought — that you think evil of me? I have borne my enemies' suspicion. Must I bear yours, too?"

"No, my boy! God forbid! But this strange avowal!"

"Ah, Father! How little you understand what my situation has been! What if this companionship was not of my seeking? What if this girl, whom I love as a sister, came to me of her own free will, rescued me when I was at death's door, nursed me through a long illness, guided me to our people? Would that journey with her — oh, that she were here, that you might yourself judge how innocent she is! — would my whole association with her seem to you less strange, even inevitable?"

"Surely, my son, when you say it." Still there was a lingering shadow on the old minister's face.

"You have distrusted me, Father!" Étienne said bitterly; "and on the word of such a man as Briancourt!"

"No, my son, not for a moment!" the minister cried passionately. "When the wretched rumor of your

fall came to me, I flung it from me indignantly. Looking in that smooth Briancourt's face, as he told the story which he professed to have tried to suppress, I knew he lied. When he averred that our people shunned you, that the pastor, Chandieu, refused baptism to your companion, and to you the communion —"

"Nay; then he told the truth."

Again the minister's face clouded.

"Because the officials at Fort Caroline believed as that wretch Briancourt led them to believe. Father, I have been a victim of unjust suspicion, of a conspiracy."

"Do not, then, blame a poor, heart-broken old man, who has stood alone here!"

"No, Father, I do not blame you. But I am grieved beyond expression."

"My son, my son, what have I not suffered for you! I knew from my people's looks that they believed the calumny that your enemies, as you say, made current. I could not disprove it. I had no letter from you, no ray of light from any quarter — only my faith in God and in you. Day and night I prayed. Still no light. Then my heart sank. If only the story had been, as the first account ran, that you were dead in that far land, I could have borne it. But this! No, my boy, I never lost faith in you, but I did lose hope that I should live to see it vindicated. I thought that I should go down to the grave sorrowing. Thank God that he has brought you back to me! Now all will be made clear."

"My dear Father!" Étienne cried, folding the old

man to his breast; and they mingled tears of love and joy.

"Now let me tell you my story from the beginning," said the younger.

Far into the night they talked of all that had befallen him in the New World. As he dwelt on Canoga's devotion, her self-sacrifice, her Christian virtues, his father listened smiling outwardly, grateful to the girl who had saved his boy's life. But deep down in his heart lurked the theologian's distrust of a pagan. He was sure that Étienne had escaped the wiles of a heathen sorceress only through his singular purity and the grace of God. The hand of Providence was plain in the catastrophe that sundered the two young people and left the girl to live out her life among her own people.

"And Félicie, Father? You have told me nothing of her," Étienne said at last, with an interest that was hardly more than languid.

"Alas, poor girl! She, too, has suffered from evil-speaking and slandering."

"What do you mean, Father?"

The minister, with evident pain and reluctance, told of certain stories about Félicie and Briancourt that had circulated in the village. As he spoke, his son's wrath rose as the father never had seen it in all his life.

"The dastardly villain!" he exclaimed. "You say, Father, that this vile story became current just after he had gone away."

"Very shortly, I should say."

"Which means, beyond a doubt, that having tried

to win her affections and failed, the ruffianly braggart revenged himself by slandering her. His very choice of a mouth-piece in that old hag, Fréjette, proves his devilish purpose. You, Father, never have doubted Félicie, have you?" All the chivalry of his nature was in arms, in behalf of his old playmate.

"As little, my boy, as I have doubted you."

"I was sure of it. We two, at all events, would not let a shadow be cast upon her, least of all by such as Briancourt and that vile Fréjette. I trust in Heaven that she never has heard the story."

"I fear that she has," his father replied, shaking his head sorrowfully.

"It is too bad! I feel this more keenly than the lies that have been told about myself. A man can face the world and conquer its prejudices, but a woman must suffer in silence. You went, of course, to her father to assure him of your unshaken confidence?"

"I went indeed, my son, but he repelled me most rudely."

"Resenting, I suppose, the mere mention of the subject as an insult. Now I understand why he treated me so ill when I met him, a while ago." Then he told his father of his experience at the mill.

The old man heard it, nodding sadly.

When they parted, late in the night, they were fully agreed as to the course to be taken.

"It matters little about me," said Étienne. "In good time people will learn the truth. But as to Félicie, I shall leave nothing undone to clear her

name from that cowardly villain's slanders. And the first thing, Father, is for you and me to show our absolute confidence in her."

The old minister smiled approval, seeing a vision of his fond dream realized.

CHAPTER XXXI

MATTHIEU BELLANGE SEES A NEW LIGHT

THE day after Étienne's reappearance in Lourdes, Bellange, moving moodily about his work, was surprised to see him standing in the doorway. Each noted changes in the other. Étienne's worn looks added greatly to the maturity of his appearance, and his former expression of boyish intensity had given place to an air of manly resolution. On his side, he observed deep lines in the miller's countenance and a mien of settled gloom.

An angry light gleamed for a minute in his dark eyes ambushed beneath their beetling brows. Then, without a word, he turned away.

"Master Bellange, I have somewhat to say to you," Étienne said quietly.

There was no reply, but the other kept his back turned and made a show of being busy with measuring some grain.

"Master Bellange, I have come hither to be heard; I have a right to it; and I will not go away until you have listened to me," Étienne persisted.

The miller flung down his measure, wheeled sharply, and faced the other, his hands twitching. "In God's name, begone, boy, ere I lose hold of myself!" he said hoarsely.

"Not before you have heard me," was the cool answer. Its tone did not fail to impress the other.

"Speak out, then, and let us make an end of it! Why have you dared to come to me after disgracing yourself?"

"I have done no such thing, — nothing that I cannot avow before all the world."

The other fixed his piercing eyes on him, but said not a word.

Étienne continued, "Cruel experience is teaching me what it is to be slandered. But my conscience is clear, and I am not disturbed. Félicie, too, has suffered —" at the mention of her name her father's face darkened, and he shot a keen, questioning look at the speaker, but settled into his habitual stolid expression as Étienne continued — "in the same way and, I believe, through the same person. He has assailed us both, to revenge himself because I once punished his insolence."

"When and how was that?" Bellange asked curtly, with a sudden quickening of interest.

"After he went to New France the second time, he insulted me grossly, and I chastised him in the presence of his associates."

Bellange's face lightened for an instant, but he said nothing.

Étienne continued, "Master Bellange, nothing has occurred that should change our relations. Félicie and I have both suffered through the devices of a common enemy. Let us face the world as friends, and by our mutual trust put evil-speakers to shame."

Bellange eyed him sharply. Was this sublime faith, or was it a deep game?

He took a turn up and down the room in silence, then stopped in front of Étienne and asked in an altered tone, "What about that Indian girl?"

"The story is true, up to a certain point. Further, it is a shameful falsehood. She has been like a sister to me, nothing more. Listen, and you will see that I could not have done otherwise than I have done." Then he rapidly recounted his experiences with Canoga, up to his separation from her.

When he had finished, he looked steadily at the miller. The latter was silent, with an air of half-conviction.

Étienne continued, "Yes, I will say more. I did not willingly leave her. I purposed bringing her to France. I should have said to my father, 'This is my sister. Be a father to her.' But the chance of war parted us."

"I must think this matter over," Bellange replied, with a softened manner. "When my mind is clear you shall know it."

"Shall I return in two days?"

"Yes; that will be enough."

CHAPTER XXXII

"THE BRIGHT COUNTENANCE OF TRUTH."

AFTER two days, as had been agreed, Étienne called on Bellange. He found him wonderfully changed. His friendliness was almost effusive. His manner was as cordial as in the old days, and there was something besides. Whether it was grateful recognition of Étienne's manly attitude or the sordid glee of a man who saw the possibility of a better bargain than he could have dreamed of, it had an amazing influence in smoothing the lines of his face and softening his manner.

At all times he was a man of few words. Now, without preliminaries, he said, "You may go and see Félicie. She expects you." It was his way of announcing that the old relations were restored.

After Étienne's former visit to him, he had said, fixing a stern gaze on his daughter, "Étienne Cazenove came to the mill to see me to-day."

Félicie flushed quickly, then turned pale.

He continued, "He talked of coming to see you, as if nothing had happened."

Not a word from Félicie. Only she trembled violently.

"Why don't you speak, you jade?"

"I — I — cannot," the girl faltered.

"Can't what? Can't speak?"

"I cannot — see him."

"What, you hussy! Too good for him, are you?"

The girl shook her head, shivering.

"Perhaps he is a better judge than you," he continued remorselessly. "Quite likely he thinks you two are on a level — now." Félicie covered her face and sobbed.

"Tut! Tut! Stop this nonsense and listen to me. He wants to come and see you, and I shall bid him come."

"Oh, Father! Indeed — indeed, I cannot — see him."

"Idiot! Do you want to throw away your last chance? When he is willing — and the most of people would think him a fool for it — to call it quits and let bygones be bygones, are you the one to make bones about it?"

There was no answer, but Félicie sat sobbing, with her hands covering her face.

"Mark me, you silly jade! I am doing the best I can for you, and don't you spoil my work." His finger was raised menacingly. "I shall bid him come to see you, and do you treat him well. Do you hear? And thank God that he is so simple."

The girl bowed her head abjectly.

So it was that Étienne, when he called on the miller, was sent into the cottage to see Félicie.

He found her changed indeed. She was pale and nervous and painfully embarrassed. No sooner did their eyes meet than she lowered hers. He tried to converse with her, but elicited only monosyllables.

Then he fell back on telling her of the wonders of the New World. She listened and gradually seemed to feel more at ease.

"Poor girl!" he said to himself, when he went away. "She suffers cruelly. But she might trust me more. Does she imagine that I have listened to Briancourt's lies?"

This visit broke the ice, and as Étienne repeated it Félicie gradually regained a more natural demeanor. But there was not the least return to her old levity.

Meanwhile the little world of Lourdes looked on, some with approval, more with cynical comment. A few averred that they had never lost faith in Étienne, and now rejoiced that it was justified. On others his evident frankness in speaking of his experiences in the New World produced that effect which candor and courage rarely fail to make. But in general the villagers, wagging their heads knowingly, declared they were not to be hoodwinked, and Étienne could not be any better than he should be, if he was going to take up with that girl. Plainly it was a bargain, they said, the pastor and the miller glad enough to have their children come together, without questions asked on either side.

On the whole, Félicie gained immensely, in a formal rehabilitation. If the minister thought her good enough to be his son's associate and, most likely, some day his wife, gossip must forsooth hold its tongue. All around the situation was improved. Even the miller's dark brow cleared, and he began to look like his old self.

Good reason indeed Félicie had to feel grateful to

Étienne, and she soon began to show that she did, at the first by gaining ease in his company, and then, as her confidence grew, by a subdued playfulness that delighted Étienne the more because of its contrast with the petulant girl whom his memory recalled. It seemed to him that the tart flavor of her old-time vivacity had by some benign alchemy been wholly turned into sweetness, and he had his old playmate by his side once more, but incomparably dearer because of this happy transmutation.

CHAPTER XXXIII

TIDINGS FROM FLORIDA

FÉLICIE was indeed changed, and changing every day. At the first she met Étienne with pitiful self-consciousness, despair at her heart. "Of what use is it?" she said to herself, after the first interview. "Soon he will hear it all. They will fill his ears with their wretched stories about me." Then she covered her face with her hands and burst into passionate sobbing.

But as Étienne came again and again, and there was no change in his demeanor, the first effect was a cowardly joy. She was safe! Then came a growing sense of something in him so fine, so chivalrous as she had never dreamed of, and with it fear passing away gave place to shame that she was so little worthy of his confidence. When she began to feel pride and joy in one who walked on heights far above entertaining suspicion and listening to gossip, a transformation began in her.

Étienne's trust indeed touched depths in her nature whose existence no former experience of life had ever revealed. For this generous faith which took her at its own high estimate of womanhood, what return could she make but to try to be worthy of it? Thank God! the past was buried. Let the future show that his trust was well placed.

With almost boundless admiration for Étienne came an overmastering impulse to mould her life on the pattern of his, to put her hand in his and let him lead her upon those sublime heights where he walked. For the first time in her life, spiritual beauty appealed to her, and it appealed with commanding power. New ideals invited her. Things once despised became the most admired things.

There were times, indeed, when the image of Briancourt beckoned her alluringly; when her heart cried for him; when all the habits of thought of her whole lifetime drew her mightily backward and downward. Then she seemed to herself to walk on the verge of a dizzy precipice, on one side green fields and peaceful pastures inviting her, on the other, far below, a raging torrent roaring for her life, and unseen hands dragging her to the cliff's edge. At times she felt herself so weak to resist that she was thankful that Briancourt was far away, and, instead, there was Étienne near at hand, with his calm strength and his gentleness.

A happy circumstance it was that she could see much of him in those critical days when the new life was forming in her. His nearness gave her the strength and encouragement she so much needed.

What wonder that she had come to look upon him as her savior, to feel towards the man whose goodness had lifted her out of the mire, and had revealed to her a vision never before dreamed of, an enthusiastic admiration as yet too reverent to be love! So there was gradually emerging a new Félicie, a sweeter, better Félicie than anybody had ever dreamed of.

On his side, Étienne found an astonishing degree of growing content in Félicie's society. He had said to himself, at the first, that love was dead in him. None indeed could ever take Canoga's place in his heart. She had given him an ideal of womanhood that dwarfed Félicie. Those two bright years in Chicora seemed like a vanished dream, as far removed from the dull routine of life in Lourdes as the glowing sun, the rich forests, the care-free denizens of Chicora were unlike the ragged woods and rocky ridges that shut in his native valley, with its plodding peasantry forever toiling for a beggarly pittance. But the dream had gone by, he said to himself. It was most unlikely that he would ever again know anything of Canoga. Months had passed since he left Florida, and still there was not a word of Ribaut and his daring venture. The silence boded ill. Should it prove that this second attempt at colonizing Florida had failed, that chapter surely would be closed forever, and he could never hope to see Canoga again.

So it was that he had begun with little heart to live his old life. He was taking it up from a sense of duty. But from the very outset he found himself putting more of spirit into his work than he had thought possible. The situation which he found as to Félicie appealed mightily to his chivalry, to his affection for his old playmate, and within a few days after his return to Lourdes he was feeling an interest and displaying an energy that he had not anticipated.

It was a sowing whose harvest was quick and ample. To his own amazement, he soon found himself enjoying Félicie's society, as, after the awkwardness of

their first meeting, he witnessed the shy unfolding of a new beauty. He could not be blind to the transformation that was going on in her and to its connection with the attitude which he had taken towards her. Modestly enough, he attributed it to the inspiring effect of new confidence aroused in her. In proportion as he was happy in the thought that he had helped her, he found a corresponding pleasure in her society. If there was not any of the spiritual stimulation which Canoga had given him, at all events it was restful and sweet to be with this young girl whose eyes were turned to him eloquent with gratitude and admiration.

Withal there was not the least disloyalty to Canoga. She held the supreme place in his heart. But now, in view of the improbability that he would ever again see her, he was deeply thankful that he had never uttered to her a word of love.

In the dejection which fell upon him, as weeks and months went by without tidings from Florida, Félicie's sympathy was sincere and helpful. She shared his enthusiasm for Rossignol and his grief at his friend's probable fate, and this was a great comfort. The circumstances drew the two greatly together. When his heart was heavy, to whom could he turn but to her, not for solace — he did not want that — but for intelligent fellow-feeling? With her it was always ready.

Then how splendidly loyal to himself she was! One day, reference having been made between them to the villagers' talk about him and the Indian girl, Félicie flung out, with flashing eyes, "Wretches!

Because they would be incapable of such conduct as yours, they cannot imagine it in another."

This had the ring of genuineness, and it was genuine. At the first Félicie had believed the worst of Étienne. She believed it at the time of their first meeting. But so deep was the impression which his goodness had made upon her, so transforming and ennobling the effect of intercourse with him, that she would now have supported with her life, if need were, her conviction of Étienne's purity.

Then she led him on to talk of his life in the New World, and especially of Canoga. It touched him deeply that here was one at least who was capable of appreciating Canoga's greatness. He could not hide from himself that his father was not enthusiastic about her. The old minister was grateful to her for what she had done for his son, and he listened smilingly to Étienne's raptures. But he never encouraged him to talk of her. Deep down, indeed, in his heart the theologian distrusted the pagan.

Félicie, on the contrary, showed unbounded interest in his experiences in Chicora, loved to hear him talk of Rossignol, listened with parted lips and kindling eyes when he spoke of Canoga, and questioned him about her. With nice tact, she avoided any expression of admiration of his and Canoga's innocent relations, but by plainly assuming it, put not only them but also herself on a higher plane.

In all this Félicie was absolutely sincere. She had come to believe any goodness possible in Étienne, and she had not a shadow of jealousy of Canoga. Why should she have, when he would never see her again?

The incident was closed. Meanwhile, in no other way could she so effectually show the unbounded gratitude she felt to Étienne as by entering with all her soul into what interested him. She felt no jealousy of the past, and it required no effort to praise the girl whom he might never hope to see again.

So it was that the relations of the two grew to be of the closest. If Canoga was enshrined in Étienne's heart, he had at hand a gentle, sweet friend whose society was all the brightness of his life.

One day he had been sitting with her and was taking his leave. She went to the gate with him. While they stood there chatting the well-known figure of Jules Loiseau came down the road. He was a shrewd old fellow, half-pedler, half-smuggler, who traveled the mountain passes, on both the French and the Spanish sides, distributing, along with his wares, the gossip of the region, with occasional tidings of international interest.

"Ah, Jules, here you are," said Étienne, "full, I'll warrant, of the latest news. What is there on the Spanish side of the mountains?"

The old man came to a halt, adjusted his stick as a support under his pack, took off his cap, and drew his sleeve across his forehead, before he uttered a word. Then he pursed up his lips, shook his head, and said laconically, "Bad news."

"What is it, then?"

"You will be sorry to hear it, my lad. When you came home the bulk of your company stayed behind, didn't it?"

"Yes, they had gone down the coast."

"Exactly so. They're all dead."

"What do you say?"

"Killed! Every one of them."

"Impossible!"

"It's true, all the same. I got it from the priest in Sebastian. The people were all talking about it, wherever I went, and making merry over it, and they had given thanks for it in all the churches. So I go to the priest — he's a customer of mine — and I ask him to tell me the truth of the matter. Then he takes out a letter from his bishop and reads it to me. It tells him that, on such a Sunday, thanks are to be given in every church in Spain for the destruction of the heretics in the Indies."

Étienne had listened, pale, almost breathless.

"I can't believe it," he said.

"I'm afraid it's true," the old man continued, shaking his head. "The bishop said that God had delivered the Lutherans into the hands of the faithful; that they had sailed to attack a colony of his most Catholic Majesty, and God had sent a terrific storm that dashed all their vessels on the coast —"

"I dreaded it," Étienne broke in. "What more?"

"The people in the vessels escaped ashore and got together. Then the Spanish officer marched down with his army, and God gave him such power that the Lutherans were killed, to the last man."

"Impossible!" Étienne exclaimed. "There always are some wounded and prisoners. This story means that our people have been butchered. Oh, I know the Spaniards' ways."

What a blow! There was but a faint hope that

the Spanish account exaggerated its extent. Was Rossignol living? Would he ever know?

And Canoga, what of her? The best that he could hope for her — and it seemed the likeliest — was that she had left the neighborhood immediately after the fall of Fort Caroline.

He turned to Félicie. Had he been less absorbed in Loiseau's recital he would have noted her painful agitation. Now she had in a measure mastered herself, and she stood looking away, pale, but outwardly calm.

"Is it not a terrible thing?" he said. "Think of our poor fellows butchered!"

"It is too horrible. I can't imagine it," she answered with white lips.

Instinctively he held out his hand toward her. Hers met his, and the warm clasp that followed conveyed a world of sympathy and trust.

CHAPTER XXXIV

GLAD DAYS FOR PASTOR CAZENOVE

COULD it be that Roland was indeed dead? Again and again Étienne seemed to hear his voice as he heard it on that wretched night before Rouen when it brought him the first note of cheer, or ringing merrily to the time of his hammer beneath the murmuring pines of Chicora, or rolling sonorously in the gray dusk, when, with the men stretched about him on the bluff hard by the fort, with his brave songs of other days he beguiled them into forgetfulness of their discontent.

Now was he indeed gone, this true knight, this heroic spirit, fallen, he trusted, as he would have chosen to fall, in the battle's red front, the clashing of steel in his ears, his beloved Queen fast in his hand; or, it might be, brutally murdered in wanton butchery?

And Canoga! Was he never to see her again? Never again to look into those great eyes beaming trust and affection? Never again to hear the music of her voice? Worst of all was the uncertainty about her. If she was at Fort Caroline, with the Spaniards in possession, — he shuddered at the thought.

In his dejection Étienne found unfailing sympathy in Félicie, and her gentle companionship was a sure

solace. A subdued melancholy had fallen upon her, in keeping with his sorrow and suggesting that she shared it. Little was said between them about the calamity in Florida, but sitting together in silence, hand in hand — a habit they fell into in those days — they made a perfect picture of two kindred souls bearing in mutual helpfulness a common burden.

A rare picture it was, too, Étienne in his fine young manhood, with his expressive, dark eyes, his strong profile, and his well-knit frame; Félicie in her fair beauty, with her satiny white skin, her shapely figure, and her head covered with an aureole of bright curls.

To Étienne one fact seemed to grow clearer every day: Lourdes was henceforth to be his world. The Marcels excepted — and they were far away, at the other end of France — he had no tie, nor call, nor work anywhere. He must find something to do and set himself to doing it. The natural, the inevitable thing seemed to be that he take up the old life where he had left it, when he went away to be a soldier. One day, half-heartedly he turned over his father's scanty stock of ancient volumes. Faugh! how musty they were — outward and visible sign of inward and spiritual barrenness! He had delved in this pit before he went away, and fancied he liked it. Now he would gladly give the whole quarry for one hour of Chicora. But Chicora was — beyond the ocean.

With a heavy sigh, he settled himself, to the intense delight of his father watching him out of the corners of his eyes, with one of the grim old Fathers. How childish the old fellow seemed, for all his air of pre-

ternatural wisdom! It was not long before his thoughts wandered away from the dreary page and he was roaming with Canoga in that bright world of hers that had no theology, yet was all God. Then painfully he dragged his mind back to its task. How doubly insipid and false to life seemed the babbling Father! Again his mind wandered and again he whipped it back to its dreary task. Oh, it was weary work. At last he was driven to giving himself a stint, so many pages each day.

The day's task done, he hied him gladly to Félicie. After the dreary hours with an ancient Father, her society was delightfully refreshing. In this new work, too, she gave him her sympathy. By making fun of the dusty tomes with which he spent his days, she helped him to take his task more lightly.

One evening he was sitting with her, after a day of yawning over Tertullian's turgid vaporings. He was heavy-hearted, weary to death. Félicie's little hand, soft and warm and white, lay in his — it was their constant habit now — and he was thinking how sweet it was to lean in perfect trust on this gentle friendship.

Presently he put his arm about her and drew her to him, saying, "Will you be my wife, Félicie?" For answer, she only dropped her head on his shoulder and wept softly. Happy girl! And to him she owed it all!

He took her in his arms and kissed her again and again, and she lay there, with a joy of surrender beyond all words.

It had come about without premeditation, but he

was glad of it. Plainly it had to be. As he thought the matter over, after leaving Félicie, he felt a quiet, sober satisfaction, wholly in keeping with his daily occupation and his outlook on the world. The bright dream had passed. Life was to be for him a sombre reality. That he had found an understanding friend, a gentle, sympathizing soul who would walk hand in hand with him, sharing his duties and lightening his burdens, was matter to be thankful for.

Hence babbling visions of what might have been! O dark eyes that haunt him, turn your wistful glances elsewhere and leave him in peace to duty and the content he has found!

The next morning, over their breakfast, with a very quiet manner, he told his father.

The old minister sprang to his feet, ran to his boy, folded him in his arms, and wept tears of joy on his shoulder. His enthusiasm was, it is true, a little chilled by the accepted lover's unemotional manner. But, on second thought, he augured well from it. It savored of a godly sobriety that was seemlier than the tempestuous passion of ordinary youth.

It was a red-letter day for the good man. Ah! Surely God was good to him. The two dreams of his life in process of fulfilment: Étienne preparing for the ministry, and about to marry Félicie! After a season of heartfelt thanksgiving he took his cane and hastened away to share his joy with his old-time crony, the pious miller.

Difference and estrangement were forgotten, and the two renewed their friendship, as they shook hands over the prospect of seeing their old compact fulfilled.

After this things settled down very satisfactorily. Étienne came and went, greeted with a broad smile of approval by the miller, whose usually stolid manner was almost jocose towards his prospective son-in-law. Félicie, too, seemed her old self, but with a vivacity that had no sting. Her playfulness pleased Étienne the more because of its contrast with his own disposition. He was happy, too; not ecstatically, but in the serious way of a man who is setting his face to live his life soberly, advisedly, and in the fear of God.

It was in April that the engagement took place, and a day late in June was set for the marriage.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE PARTING OF THE WAYS

ONE evening Étienne, coming in from sitting with Félicie, was met by his father, who said to him, with an anxious face, "A stranger is waiting to see you."

Entering the room, Étienne saw a man whose appearance would have attracted attention in any company. He was richly dressed and bore himself with an air of proud distinction; but his swarthy face, tanned almost to the hue of mahogany, suggested much experience of tropic suns, while his hard eye and harsh features seemed to indicate a ruthless nature steeled in a stern school. Well might Pastor Cazenove be disturbed at the coming of this man, who looked as if he would be more at home on a pirate's deck than in a Christian household. What could be his business with Étienne?

The stranger did not leave this point long in doubt after he was closeted with Étienne. "Monsieur Cazenove," he said, with marked courtesy, "let me introduce myself. I am Dominique de Gourgues, of Mont de Marsan."

Étienne fairly started. Dominique de Gourgues, the most renowned sea-rover of all the Mediterranean! The Gallic Hawkins, slave-catcher and free-booter, the pride of French and the terror of Spanish seamen!

His name recalled to his hearer a night during his first voyage — what an age ago! — when, seated on the deck, with the stars shining in a moonless sky, and no sound but the creaking of a block and the rustle and straining of the canvas, he listened to an old sea-dog's story of the great rover's life, — how he had sailed and fought from his boyhood up; how the Spaniards took and chained him to an oar in a galley, how he was drenched with rain and scorched with heat until he got a welcome change of masters through the galley's being taken by Turks; how a second capture, by Knights of Malta, gave him his freedom; and how, ever after, the consuming passion of his life was hatred of all Spaniards.

According to common report, he was living in retirement on his estate at Mont de Marsan, not very far distant, enjoying the fruits of his unholy traffic in human beings, but still nourishing the same undying animosity to the people across the mountains. What was he, of all men, doing here?

He quickly made known his errand. "I have heard, Monsieur Cazenove," he said, with the same studied courtesy, "that you were with our people in Florida and escaped from the massacre at Fort Caroline. Tell me the story, if you please."

As Étienne described the ghastly tragedy, he nodded from time to time. At the conclusion of the narrative he said, "You have learned the rest, no doubt. I mean the fate of Ribaut's ships."

"Only the Spanish account, that they were wrecked, and the crews, after escaping ashore, were defeated by the Spaniards."

"Defeated! Say rather, butchered! Butchered in cold blood, after they had surrendered in good faith."

"I suspected it! How did you learn the truth?"

"From one who survived."

"Some have survived, then?" Étienne cried, clutching the other's arm in painful suspense. "You have seen them?"

"I have seen one only, a sailor called Christophe le Breton. He was spared and brought to Spain, escaped, and came to France. But at least a few others are living."

"My God! Did he mention one Roland Rossignol?"

Gourgues shook his head. "I have not heard the name," he said. Then he added quickly, taking his cue from Étienne's breathless eargerness, "Without doubt others are held as prisoners at Fort Caroline."

"You think it, Monsieur?" Étienne asked, with a look so pathetic that even the stern Gourgues was touched.

"Surely! Why not? Where hundreds were concerned, and some, we know, were saved alive, why not a considerable number? I doubt not that there are many at Fort Caroline, reserved for the galleys."

"Oh, if I could see this Christophe!"

"It is impossible. When I talked with him, he was about to sail for the Newfoundland fisheries. He had returned from the New World penniless, and he needed money."

Étienne was silent, absorbed in thought. His visitor was watching him closely. Presently he said cautiously, "What think you, Monsieur Cazenove, should be done in view of this atrocious outrage?"

"I suppose that our King will demand satisfaction from the King of Spain."

"What if I tell you that the demand has been made — and spurned?" The speaker's eyes flashed, and his voice was hoarse with passion. "That Philip of Spain has even demanded that the Admiral of France be punished, mark you! for sending a colony into territory which our King rightfully claims!"

He paused, fixing his keen eyes on Étienne, who was silent. Then he resumed, "When our countrymen's blood cries for vengeance; when our nation's honor has been outraged — " He broke off suddenly, glanced towards the door, and asked in a lower tone, "Am I safe in talking freely?"

"Go on. There is nobody within hearing," Étienne said, with an affectation of coldness, while the blood was surging in his veins.

Gourgues resumed, in a hoarse whisper, "Has not the time come for private action, that the stain on our country's honor be wiped out?" He paused, scanning his hearer's face. "If some gentleman have it in mind to set on foot such an enterprise, would it not enlist you?"

"I am not concerned with vengeance," Étienne answered coldly. He must not let this man see how deeply his wild proposal stirred him.

"But think of your friend — Rossignol, did you say? — perchance at this very moment languishing in the prison at Fort Caroline. Will you leave him to his fate, to burn and freeze, to be drenched with rain and to famish, chained to an oar day and night,

with the scum of the earth? You do not know the life of a galley-slave. I do."

Étienne still held his peace, apparently in deep thought, in reality too much disturbed to speak.

The other resumed, eagerly, "Monsieur Cazenove, it is a just and righteous cause, and it needs you. You know the Florida coast and the approaches to Fort Caroline, and my unfortunate friend Laudonnière highly commends you as a soldier.'

Though Étienne was silent, perhaps the glitter in his eyes betrayed his secret sympathy.

"Let me tell you," the other continued, "more about this enterprise. I am embarking my all in it. I have sold my property, and with the proceeds I am equipping three vessels. My crews are almost complete. They know nothing of my real destination. As a screen, I have secured a commission from the Governor of Guienne for a war on the blacks of Benin," — a euphemism for a slaving expedition. "Without such a precaution, some whisper of my design might get abroad, the spies of the Spanish King would quickly hear it, and his huge galleons would meet me on the other side. You see the need of absolute secrecy."

"I understand, Monsieur," Étienne replied with forced deliberateness. "Yet, if I should decide to join you, I should demand an exception in favor of three persons. Your purpose would be as safe in their keeping as in mine."

Gourgues pondered a moment, then said, "It shall be as you ask, in token of my confidence in you. You join me?"

"I cannot decide this matter at once," Étienne answered firmly.

Then Gourgues played his last card. "Close with me, and on the spot I sign your commission as my lieutenant."

Étienne shook his head. "Not yet," he said.

"How much time do you need?"

"Until to-morrow morning. Stay here to-night, Monsieur, and in the morning you shall have my answer."

"Agreed!" the rover cried, seeing that he had struck the right note.

Étienne was glad that he did not need, in his agitated state of mind, to face his father. The poor old man had gone to bed full of apprehensions as to this ill-favored visitor's errand.

The predominant feeling in Étienne's mind was joy. The hope of finding Rossignol alive and of rescuing him was enough to draw him over the ocean. How much he was moved by the thought of Canoga he scarcely acknowledged to himself. Yet he was resolved to find her, though he should need to traverse the New World as widely as Soto or Coronado. And, come what might, he would never willingly be parted from her.

In reality, his decision was made the moment that Gourgues revealed his plan. But the situation was perplexing.

First there was Félicie. He saw her again in imagination as she was at his return, dejected and nerveless. Now, when she had grown to be bright, helpful, sweet, and loving, he must take a step that would again

cloud over all her sky. Poor girl! She would not have, like him, the inspiration of hope, the thrill of movement and adventure to sustain her, but must fold her hands and patiently abide the uncertain issue of a perilous enterprise, one, too, in which she had no personal interest, which involved the indefinite postponement of her marriage, and which might make her a widow ere she was a wife.

Undeniably, it was hard on her, and scarcely less hard on him. The necessity of deferring his marriage, with the sure knowledge that his action would be misconstrued, and that, because of the mystery as to his going away, all the little dogs of Lourdes, its Tray, Blanche, and Sweetheart, would mouth and yelp at Félicie, as if she were deserted, — this hurt him sorely.

Then there was his father. Poor old man! He had suffered so much already. Now, when everything seemed auspicious, the fulfilment of his dearest hopes was to be postponed for an uncertain time, it might be forever.

He had a troubled night, between the thought of the pain he was about to inflict on those he loved, and the deep pain he himself felt.

Still he did not waver. He did not even reason about the matter. A power drew him over the ocean as irresistible as fate.

When he met Gourgues, the next morning he said quietly, "I accept your offer, Monsieur."

With a smile that plainly meant, "I was sure of it," and handing Étienne a letter of appointment as his lieutehant, he asked, "How soon can you join me?"

"How early do you need me?"

"The sooner the better. I want your help in completing our equipment."

"I have no horse for the journey."

"I shall send you one, as soon as I return to Mont de Marsan. Do you join me as soon as possible at La Rochelle."

It was so arranged, and, after breakfast, Gourgues rode away.

CHAPTER XXXVI

BRIGHT EYES DIMMED

WITH a heavy heart Étienne sought his father. The poor old man was moping over his books, full of miserable forebodings, and he did not find the look on Étienne's face reassuring.

As he listened in silence while his son detailed his plans, his head sank lower. Going again to New France! Going with the avowed purpose of seeking and rescuing his friend and other prisoners. But what of the Indian girl, that crafty temptress whose professed conversion to Christianity — a change too facile to be genuine — made him only the more utterly distrust her? Had she no place in Étienne's plans? He greatly feared that she figured in them more than Étienne was conscious of. It looked deplorably like a case of self-delusion.

"But, my son, your approaching marriage!" he expostulated, with an air of finality.

"Father, I am sorry to leave Félicie just before the time set for our marriage. I feel it keenly myself and even more for her. She will have much to endure, poor girl! She must summon all her courage and bear it as best she can."

"Why must you go?" the father asked bluntly.

"O Father," Étienne cried, "if you had ever been

a soldier, you would feel how this call touches my manhood. If I did not obey it, if I left my comrade — not to speak of other prisoners — to languish in the Spaniards' hands, most likely chained to an oar in a galley, shame would dog me the rest of my days."

"Let others, let this black-visaged rover go. It is an enterprise that well befits his character. Surely it does not need you."

"Much more than you imagine, Father. At the best, it is a perilous undertaking. For the least hope of success every advantage must be seized. A guide is needed who both knows the approaches to Fort Caroline and has the confidence of the Indians, whose help is essential. I am the man, yes, the only man. That is why I am sought out and asked to go as second in command."

"And if — if you never return?" the father asked with a quivering voice.

"You will know, dear Father," Étienne returned simply, "that I died trying to do my duty." "You will be happier," he added after a pause, "thinking of your son dead, with honor, in a far land, than seeing him alive here, with shame."

The old man, shaking his head gloomily, lowered it upon his hand and so sat for a while.

Presently he said, "You must know that nobody will believe your destination to be that which is given out. They will see that the story of an expedition to the coast of Africa is a mere subterfuge."

"Now, Father, you are not quite fair. We do sail first to the African coast. We have a commission to execute there."

"Alas! they will not believe that you are going away, on the eve of the time set for your marriage, to discharge a mysterious commission on the coast of Africa," the father said, shaking his head sadly. "Who could blame them?"

"Not I," Étienne answered simply. "Misconstruction is the penalty of secrecy. But secrecy is essential."

"They will see some evil design back of your ostensible purpose. I fear," the elder said musingly, drumming with his fingers on the table before him, "that they will revive the stories about you and — the Indian girl."

Étienne started slightly.

"Why not? They must imagine a motive strong enough to draw you away from Félicie; and there is none other known to them, none other that you are at liberty to acknowledge."

"So let it be, then. I must endure what I cannot help."

The old man was almost irritated at his son's inflexibility. He continued, "And this Canoga — you will see her, I suppose."

"I shall find her, at any peril and at any cost," Étienne returned simply.

His father's face hardened perceptibly. "And then?"

"If she will come, I shall bring her home with me, as I should already have done, had it been possible."

"And Félicie?"

"I shall say to her, 'Félicie, receive this sister.'"

"Will she, do you think?" the father asked, with a keen look.

"I believe she will. She is most reasonable and gentle, and she feels the greatest admiration for Canoga as I have pictured her."

The father raised his eyebrows. "And the people, what will they say?"

"Whatever they may please, Father. If Félicie and you and I know that we are doing what is right, can't we have faith to abide the consequences?"

The father shook his head sadly, unconvinced. But where was the use of further argument? Even suspicion would have been disarmed by Étienne's frankness; and it was evident that he had thought out his problem and determined his course.

From that time forth the old minister sought prayerfully, as he had done four years before, to resign himself to that which he could not avert.

With Bellange it was a very different affair. The unctuous friendliness of his greeting changed, at Étienne's first mention of his intended departure, to an ominous scowl, the beady black eyes glinting under the pent-house eyebrows, and the swarthy face flushing darkly.

"Where are you going?" he growled.

Étienne patiently went over the same ground as with his father, but this time to a hearer whose smouldering resentment for his earlier going away and whose suspicions of Étienne were revived in full force, and who was moved to dissemble his rage and his conviction that his daughter was about to be jilted for the dusky enchantress in Florida, only by

a strong feeling that he had a masterful will to deal with, and that policy would avail more than opposition.

The miller listened sullenly, with knit brows and face turned away.

"Does your father approve of this?" he asked glumly.

"I should not say he approves; but he is reconciled to it."

Bellange's lip curled scornfully, but he was silent.

After a pause he said, "And what of your approaching marriage?"

"It must await my return."

"And if you never come back?" the other asked, suddenly facing Étienne squarely and fixing him with a look in his glittering eyes in which were concentrated suspicion and rage.

"The issue is in higher hands than mine," the young man answered quietly, meeting the other's eyes.

Bellange turned away, quivering, and made a futile pretense of busying himself. Already he had encountered this inflexible will, and he dared not trust himself to speak. He could only have uttered impotent execrations. The situation put him at Étienne's mercy.

But there was no need of mincing matters with Félicie.

"What does this mean, you hussy?" he roared at her, when he went into the cottage. "Here's your betrothed" — he snarled at the word — "going away again! A nice muddle you have made of it! I have

given you all the chance in the world, and you have thrown it away. You might have been married by this time, and be an honest woman. But you have fooled and fooled."

He paused, wagging his head bitterly and glowering at her, while she shrank under his baleful eyes.

"Mark me! He'll never come back. He is going to —"

He did not finish the sentence. She had fled the room.

Poor girl! She was already wretched enough, for she had had an interview with Étienne.

She had entered the room all brightness and smiles, and, greeting him with a kiss, had thrown herself into a seat beside him, crying gaily, "So, Mr. Gentleman Adventurer, you had a visitor last evening! A swarthy cavalier, by all accounts, with a dash of the pirate about him. Oh, but I should have liked to see him! Some sea crony of yours, I suppose, come to talk over old days."

When Étienne, taking her hand, said very gravely, "What if I tell you, dear, that he has come to take me away for several months?" her face suddenly turned ashen, she gasped, and he felt her hand grow cold.

The next moment she flushed, and her eyes lighted with anger. It was a momentary revival of the old Félicie. He was trifling with her! This was a pretext for deserting her! Then, before she had uttered a word, came a return to her better self, and she stifled the rising suspicion. How good, how generous he had been to her! And how sweet was his love!

Oh, it was unworthy to entertain a mean thought of him.

"Tell me — all," she faltered, nestling, all trembling, within his arm, as if to hear her doom.

Very gently and considerately Étienne unfolded his plans, deploring the need of secrecy and its inevitable consequence, misconstruction. She listened, too much crushed to attempt argument or an assertion of her rights. Her rights indeed! What rights had she? she was saying to herself, while she listened, shivering, to his statement.

Once only she hardened a little. It was when he mentioned Canoga. But he spoke so frankly of hoping to bring her home with him, to be a sister to both of them, that she was ashamed of the momentary suspicion.

One effort she made to gain a sure hold. With pitiful appeal, she said, "May we not —" she faltered a little —"be married before you go?"

"Impossible, dearest! I am only waiting for a horse, which should be here to-morrow. Besides, it would be wrong."

"Why?"

"It would be cruel to leave you as a bride. You must remember, dear, there is always a chance — for this is a hazardous enterprise — that I may never return."

She trembled. "Oh," she cried, looking up into his face with swimming eyes, "let me have my way in this! I am ready to-day, this hour! If you must go, I would have you go as my husband. If — if indeed you should not come back, I should bear my

sorrow better, if I knew that I had a right to call you mine."

He drew her to him, kissing her tenderly. "If anything could persuade me, dearest, that appeal would. But it cannot be. I should despise myself for taking a mean advantage of your affection. The marriage ceremony is the consecration of a union that is expected to be lifelong. To go through it on the eve of a separation that may be forever, would be — on my part, at least — base selfishness."

"No, no! You could not be selfish. Be so unselfish now as to give way to me in this. Let me hear your father pronounce us man and wife, before we part."

He shook his head firmly. "It cannot be. You do not know how I view this matter; else you would not ask it. When I stand before God and man and take you for my wife, it can only be because I look forward to living by your side, to sharing my life with you. To do so now would be to take a solemn vow with an express reservation making it of no effect. It would be folly and wickedness."

She drooped and nestled closer to him, weeping softly.

"Be brave and hopeful, dear," he said. "Let us trust that we shall be parted for only a few months. Then with clear consciences we can give ourselves to each other for so long as we both shall live. Come, dry these tears, little one, and smile again. A few months will slip quickly by, when the heart is lighted with faith and hope. And then—" A long, tender embrace said the rest.

So with loverlike interchanges they passed the hour, and Étienne left Félicie more resigned to their separation.

The next day there was a sad parting between father and son. Then Étienne rode through the village, very pale, very erect, and looking cold and stern. In truth, he was reflecting that these people who stood in their doorways waving smiling adieux and making flattering comments on the martial figure he cut, mounted on a fine horse, and with an armed man riding after him, were the same that, a few months before, peeped at him from behind doors and insolently leered at him, as he hobbled into the village; the same that, so soon as he should be beyond their hearing, would fall upon Félicie like hungry wolves and would wring his father's heart with their cruel backbiting.

He stopped at the mill for a last word. Bellange was dour and stern, his rage of the previous day having settled into a chronic sullenness.

His wife, an older Félicie in appearance, but without her daughter's refinement, crushed by years of repression on the part of her lord, seemed more cowed than ever. Scared by the consciousness of a painful situation which she could in no way change, she looked at Étienne with eyes of dumb entreaty.

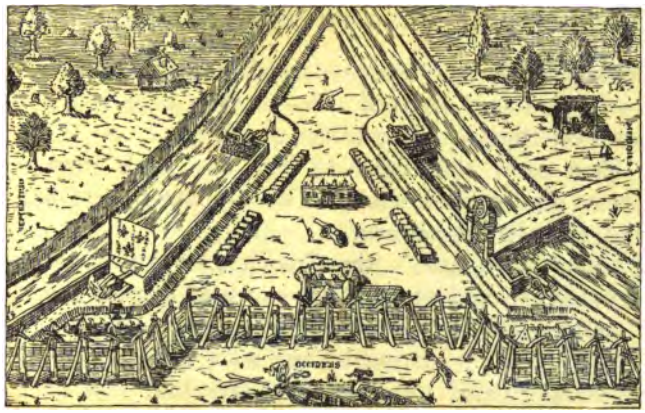
In Félicie a few hours had wrought a pitiful change. Her own misgivings and her father's taunts showed their effects in her wan cheeks and hollow eyes. Try as he might, Étienne could not cheer her. When the last words, as he supposed, had been said, the last embrace exchanged, she suddenly flung herself upon

him convulsively, crying, "Oh! you will come back to me, will you not?"

"As surely, dear, as I live," he answered solemnly.

So he went his way heavy-hearted, leaving Lourdes buzzing with many a bitter gibe at the Bellanges and much praise of his shrewdness in not letting himself be entrapped into a marriage with the miller's daughter.

PART V



CHAPTER XXXVII

THE GUARD-HOUSE OF FORT CAROLINE AGAIN

ONE afternoon in the following spring the gunners in a redoubt at the mouth of the St. John's River saw three sail steering northward. Of course they must be Spanish ships. Who else dared sail those waters? Accordingly they fired a salute, which was duly returned.

Three days later, as the same gunners were dispersing after their dinner, they were startled by the cry, "To arms! To arms! The French are upon us!"

It was a cannoneer who, chancing to mount the rampart, gave the alarm. Then he fired his piece at the approaching enemy. The next moment he fell back into the work with a French pike driven through him by an agile Indian. Before the Spaniards had recovered from their surprise the French were streaming over the rampart, while their native allies, yelling

their fiendish war-cry, swarmed around the fort. Not a Spaniard escaped. A few who were not cut down on the spot were taken prisoners.

Then came shot crashing into the work from a fort on the opposite shore. The Spaniards there had seen what had happened.

"Man these guns!" the French commander cried. It was done, and at once the captured cannon began to reply to the fire from the other shore.

Meanwhile the daring leader, with some eighty of his men, crossed the river in boats that had been brought along the shore, steering for a landing above the other fort. The Indians had no idea of missing the remainder of the entertainment. They raised their war-whoop and plunged into the water. Soon the river swarmed with braves swimming with one hand and holding up bow and arrows in the other. The second fort, like the first, was carried with a rush. The defenders' retreat was cut off, and every man who was not killed on the spot was taken prisoner.

Then Dominique de Gourgues paused. Since he sailed eight months had elapsed, during which he had overcome difficulties that would have disheartened any but the most resolute man. Arrived at the mouth of the St. Mary's, he held a pow-wow with the Indians, who had assembled in great numbers to resist the landing of what they supposed to be a new force of Spaniards. When they found the new-comers to be Frenchmen, especially when they recognized their old friend, Étienne, they were overjoyed. Ripe and ready for an attack on the oppressive Spaniards, they

soon gathered a force of several hundred to march with Gourgues. Then with the utmost secrecy he stole upon the enemy's outworks and swept them, as we have seen.

The main fort, San Mateo, as the Spaniards called the rebuilt Fort Caroline, still remained. Its garrison knew what had happened to the outposts and could not be surprised. Therefore there was no need of haste, and Gourgues gave his men two days to rest. Then he marched to the attack.

It was a formidable undertaking. The place was held by several hundred Spaniards and should have been successfully defended; but a sort of panic had seized them. The ease with which the smaller forts had been carried made them fancy that the Frenchmen numbered thousands. The Indians, swarming in the woods around, so beset the work that nobody could venture out, while Gourgues deliberately made ladders in preparation for the assault.

When all was ready, he moved forward to the attack, with his force divided into two parties, one led by himself, the other by Étienne. So soon as the assailants came into view, the Spanish guns opened, and Gourgues drew off his men in a feigned retreat. Immediately the Spaniards ran into the trap. Imagining that the French were discomfited, they hurried out in a strong body to pursue them.

As they advanced, Gourgues saw his opportunity. Turning quickly to Étienne and pointing with his sword, he cried:

"Take your men, on the run, to the edge of yonder wood, while I hold the ground here! Hide in the

underbrush till the enemy are abreast of you. Then strike them in the flank."

On came the infatuated Spaniards, shouting confidently their battle-cry, "Santiago! Santiago!"

Hearing it, Étienne ground his teeth, remembering that stormy dawn when he had seen his comrades butchered in cold blood. He only signed to his men to lie low and keep quiet.

Suddenly a deadly volley roared and flashed on the Spaniards' flank, fairly mowing them down. Before they could recover from their confusion, Étienne and his men were among them, plying their steel so effectually that they broke in a panic.

Meanwhile Gourgues led his own force in a charge upon the fort and carried it in a swift rush. The victory was complete. Fugitives running into the woods were tomahawked and scalped by screeching Indians, glad to wipe out the long score of robbery and oppression. All was soon over, and the fort in the hands of the victors.

While Gourgues deliberately executed his prisoners in cold-blooded vengeance, Étienne hastened to inquire of the Indians for Canoga. They all pointed to the guard-house. So near, when he had thought her in Chicora!

He knew the place well and ran thither. It was the cabin, built of stout puncheons, in which he had spent the first few hours of his stay at Fort Caroline. A sentry lay dead before the entrance. Étienne threw himself against the door, and it gave way. In the outer room a clanking figure advanced to meet him.

"My son!" it cried.

"Roland! Is it you indeed? Oh, thank God! Thank God!"

On the very spot where they had been reunited after their former long separation, they clasped each other in a loving embrace.

"Where is Canoga?" Étienne asked breathlessly, freeing himself from the bear-like hug of those mighty arms.

Rossignol pointed to the door of the inner room. Étienne pushed it open.

The next moment, with a cry, "Canoga! My sister!" he held her locked in his arms, while her head drooped on his shoulder in a sweet, shy embrace.

The next instant the thought of Félicie recalled him to himself, and he gently drew away, still holding each of her hands in his. How wasted she was! Shackled, too, as if in mockery of her weakness.

"I knew you would come," she said softly, her great eyes, in their hollow sockets more luminous than ever, meeting his with the old look of perfect trust.

A rush of tender memories swept over him. Who in all the world was so brave, so true, so sweet as she? And these cowards had dared imprison and chain her! Her who was freer in spirit than the wild bird!

In a mad impulse he caught her again in his arms and strained her to his bosom.

Meanwhile Rossignol through the open door looked on with an expression that from one of deep pain quickly passed into something high and fine.

With a long, deep sigh Étienne released Canoga.

In another moment he was hastening out to get a smith to release the prisoners. Soon he came back with one. While the man was engaged in his task a gun boomed on the water-side.

"Ah! There is the signal to call in stragglers," said Étienne. "We have done what we came to do, and the sooner we get away the better, because of the enemy's greater force at St. Augustine."

He turned tenderly to Canoga. "My sister, you will go with us?"

She nodded, her eyes bright with joy.

"Then come with me to the store-room," said Rossignol to Étienne. "There is a lot of women's gear that Ribaut brought out. You can get out some of it and let Canoga choose what she needs while I cut poles and make a litter to carry her. We must see whether we can persuade some old Indian woman to come with us to France as her attendant."

The two men burst into the store-room. While Étienne turned over the heaps of garments that Ribaut had landed before he sailed away on his fatal venture, Rossignol searched the room. Suddenly with a great cry of joy he pounced upon something.

"Ah, Frédégonde, my Queen!" he exclaimed, "how shamefully they have treated you!"

He was ruefully surveying the rusty scabbard. Then, drawing the tarnished blade, he muttered, "Villains! They could no more appreciate than they could use her."

Returning the sword to the scabbard, he exclaimed, with a sigh of relief, "Thank God! We two are reunited. With her by my side, I am a man again."

Étienne took out a great heap of clothing from which Canoga might supply her needs, while Rossignol hastened to provide a litter.

An old woman was easily found who would accompany Canoga to France. Indeed, many more of the Indians would have been glad to go, under such conditions. They trooped, women and children, from the village, so soon as they understood that the Frenchmen were about to depart, filling the air with doleful howls. They had hoped that their white brothers had come to stay among them. To sink back under Spanish rule was a prospect that filled them with dismay. The French had been troublesome in their day, but their rule at Fort Caroline now seemed a Golden Age.

Soon the party was on the march for the ships, Canoga borne by two stalwart warriors in a litter made of deerskins stretched over poles, Étienne and Rossignol walking ahead, and the whole procession escorted by a crowd of natives, the men mostly in gloomy silence, the women wailing dismally.

"Now tell me," said Étienne to Rossignol, as they went along together, each carrying an axe and occasionally chopping away boughs or underbrush, to clear a passage for the litter, "by what miracle you are alive. I have scarcely dared hope it. Begin from the time that we parted and you sailed away with Ribaut."

"You have heard, of course," Rossignol began, "of the terrific hurricane that separated our ships and wrecked every single one, scattering them along to the south of their new place that the Spaniards

call St. Augustine. The crews managed to get ashore and formed two parties, which knew nothing of each other. Both marched northward, in the hope of reaching Fort Caroline. Our being divided gave the Spaniards their opportunity. Had we been together in one body, we could have rendered a good account of ourselves."

"In which party were you?"

"I was in the one that was nearest St. Augustine and first encountered the Spaniards. You have heard, I suppose, that our officers surrendered. In fact, they had no choice. We were starving; and as we had the Spanish governor's pledge, we thought we were safe."

"How were you undeceived?" Étienne asked.

"The first thing that aroused my suspicions was a priest's coming forward and saying, 'Are there any Christians here?' Of course, he meant Catholics. Several Breton sailors declared they were Catholics. They were set in a group by themselves.

"'Aha! some deviltry afoot,' I said to myself.

"Then a call was made for any artisans among us. Two or three carpenters answered. They also were set apart."

"Did you speak up?" Étienne asked.

"Not a word. Presently one of the Breton sailors pointed me out and said, 'That man is an armorer, and a Catholic besides.'"

"The priest, a beetle-browed fellow, came to me and said, 'Are you Catholic or Lutheran?'

"'As much of one as of the other,' I answered.

"He turned away disgusted.

"'But he is an armorer; there is none better,' several of the Bretons cried.

"The upshot of the matter was that I was put into a small party that was taken in a boat to St. Augustine."

"You did not see the massacre, then?"

"No; it took place after we had been sent away. We knew too well what had happened, when Menendez marched in, the next morning, with his butchers and without a single prisoner."

"So you did not witness Ribaut's death?"

"No; he was in the second party. That, also, surrendered, without knowing the fate of ours, and trusting to a similar pledge. We only learned of the second butchery when five fresh prisoners were added to our number at St. Augustine. Ribaut, they said, died like a soldier. 'What do a few years more or less matter?' he said. 'Do your will. I am ready.'

"Brave man!" Étienne exclaimed. "If only his courage had been tempered with discretion! And his evil genius, Briancourt, — how did he die?"

"'He did not die at all."

"What? Not saved by his faith, surely?"

"No," Rossignol replied, somewhat grimly. "But the fellow behaved better than I expected of him. You see, he belonged to a third party of castaways, who, suspecting the Spaniards, rather than surrender, broke off from Ribaut's command and marched away to the southward. Menendez pursued them with a large force, and I did not doubt that he would come back red-handed, as before. Instead, he reappeared with more than a hundred prisoners. He had given

them such assurances of safety that they yielded; and he kept his word."

"Why, do you suppose?"

"Chiefly because there was no longer any excuse for barbarity. The number of prisoners was too small to menace the safety of their captors or to exhaust their provisions. So Briancourt was brought in, haggard and dirty, but as jaunty and insolent as ever."

"The Governor-General, I suppose, clapped them all in irons immediately?"

"Quite the reverse. He treated them all very well, — from politic motives, no doubt. He even invited the gentlemen to his own table, and Briancourt was soon strutting about the fort, very much at his ease."

"What became of him at last?"

"He has been put where he will never do harm any more. When supply-ships came from Spain, Menendez took the opportunity of sending his prisoners over. He first gave out that those who would accept the Catholic faith should go to Spain as free men and be honorably employed. Those who refused should go as prisoners, and they must expect to end their days in the galleys. To my surprise, Briancourt stood out and swore roundly that he would not change his faith to please any man. So away he went, among the future galley-slaves, defiant as ever."

"It is better than I should have expected of him. Why were you not given your freedom? Surely, as a Catholic, you were entitled to it."

"Unfortunately, they needed me. I had the

liberty of the fort, however, for of course there was no danger of my running away. When they rebuilt Fort Caroline, I begged to be sent there as master-armorer, in order that I might be near Canoga."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

CANOGA'S PERIL

"A thousand liveried angels lackey her."
— MILTON, *Comus*.

THAT evening the party bivouacked. Étienne sat late by the camp-fire, his mind filled with a throng of thoughts.

In a little circle about him the firelight was reflected from the tall, straight trunks of mighty pines, standing forward as if in mute challenge of this daring intrusion on their primeval domain: back of them, the black depths of the sleeping forest; at his feet, his sleeping comrades; overhead, through interstices in the dark canopy of foliage, the eternal stars.

It was such a scene as he would never look upon again. By the next evening he would be far away from this bright Southern land, with its wealth of beauty, its boundless woods, its wide, shimmering waters, its balmy air, and the simple, kindly children of the forest.

Rossignol came and sat beside him. Pointing to the shelter of boughs under which Canoga lay, he said, speaking low, "She is sleeping sweetly as a child. Dear soul! what a day for her! She has passed to life from the very shadow of death."

"Now tell me about her," Étienne said eagerly. He had waited until they two might be alone together.

"She is as grand a woman as ever breathed," Rossignol began, his eyes kindling. "She is of the stuff that saints and martyrs are made of. When I was sent back to Fort Caroline, she and I fell into very much the old way of living. Being a prisoner at large, without a shadow of a chance of escaping, I had full liberty within certain bounds, and I spent much time with her. We did not worry about you, for we knew from the report of the Indians that you were among those who got away to sea."

"Did she know I had not willingly left her?" said Étienne. "In fact, I was unconscious when I was taken on board La Mouette; and when I regained my senses, she was at sea."

"If she did not know it, at all events she felt not a shadow of resentment against you. She had, on the contrary, from the first, a deep conviction that you would come back."

"Singular!"

"Often she would say to me, with her serene smile, 'Never fear. Étienne will come.' I did not openly question it; but I had grave doubts whether I should ever see you again, for it was not likely that, after two disastrous failures, our countrymen would make a third effort to settle this region."

"How did the Spaniards treat her?"

"At the first, just the same as the other Indians. The trouble began when two priests came here to establish a mission. The King of Spain, they said, intended to convert the natives and make this a

Christian country. They began by calling on the Indians to be baptized. A few at once consented, from policy and curiosity. Then the pompous ceremonial made a great impression on them. It was mighty 'medicine,' they said. Probably they imagined that it was the secret of the white men's power. Hundreds flocked to be baptized. In that way they could conciliate both the Spaniards and the Spaniards' God."

"What of Canoga?" Étienne asked, with concern.

"Viewing the ceremony, she was troubled and perplexed. This new phase of religion, so different from her simple faith, bewildered her. After we had come away, she said to me, shaking her head, 'Their God is different from mine.' No doubt she had thought that all Christians believe alike. But she never wavered in her convictions."

"Brave girl!"

"You may well say so. Her faith soon was put to a sharp test. When the greater part of the tribe had been baptized of their own free will, the priests demanded that all should be; if they refused, they would be punished. Some yielded; others, who would not give in, ran away. Canoga would not do either. The priests seized her and locked her up as an obstinate heathen. Still she would not yield. After a time they released her and for a while left her in peace."

Étienne gave a great sigh of relief.

"Yes, but for a short time only. They heard of you in some way, and of your having taught her. That put her in a new light. She was worse than an

obdurate pagan; she was a heretic, a disciple of Luther, a child of Satan. They seized her a second time. Her people urged her to yield. 'It is good medicine, and it cannot hurt you,' they said.

"'It would be wicked for me. My God forbids it,' she answered.

"'Run away, then,' they said. 'Go back to your own people in Chicora.' I, too, gave her the same advice.

"'I have done no wrong, and God bids me stay here,' was her answer.

"The priests were outraged. They organized themselves as a court of inquisition and haled her before it, as a contumacious heretic. One of them read a long libel, in Spanish of course. It was all Greek to her, but I had been allowed to stand with her, to interpret, and I told her the substance of it, namely, that it called on her to abjure her false doctrines and be baptized.

"'Tell them,' she answered, 'they have their God, and I have mine. I cannot give up mine for theirs.'

"They looked black and whispered together. Presently one of them said to me, 'Does she acknowledge the Blessed Trinity?'

"I put the question to her, trying to make it as plain as I could.

"She looked puzzled and shook her head. 'I do not know what that is. I never have heard of it,' she said.

"'A Christian indeed, and never has heard of the Blessed Trinity!' one of them cried, sniffing scornfully. 'See the harvest of the devilish seed brought hither

by Ribaut!' Then he took off his rosary and handed it to me, saying, 'Bid her kiss the cross.'

"I held it out to her and repeated the demand. She drew back, shook her head firmly, and said, 'I dare not. My God does not teach me so.'

"'Take her away!' they thundered, in a fury. 'Bring her back to-morrow to hear the sentence of the Church!'

"The next day one of them stood up and read a long decree declaring her a pernicious heretic, tainted with the damnable teachings of Martin Luther. It concluded that, unless before Trinity Sunday she should recant and abjure her heresy, she must on that day be burned, for her soul's good and as an expiation to the Blessed Trinity."

Étienne clenched his teeth and frowned.

"On Trinity Sunday, mark you!" Rossignol continued. "That is just seven weeks from yesterday. When I repeated the sentence to her, it did not disturb her in the least. She even smiled. But my anger blazed up.

"'It will be murder,' I said to the beetle-browed priest, 'if you kill this girl. You have no authority from the Inquisition. You are but missionaries. Harm this innocent girl, and the Pope shall hear of it, all Christendom shall know of it. I am a prisoner here, but I am a Catholic. You dare not lay a hand on me, and while I live I shall denounce you.'

"They scowled at me, but they knew I was within my rights. They reached me, however, in another way. By representing to the commandant that my example was pernicious to the garrison, they got me

locked up in the guard-house. In that way for the past month I have shared Canoga's imprisonment."

"Thank God!" Étienne ejaculated fervently.

"Though she was under sentence of death, she was quite untroubled. As the time went by, knowing that those fiendish priests are capable of any iniquity in the name of religion, I became more and more apprehensive for her. On her part there was not the least sign of fear or even of concern. She had her inward sources of comfort and inspiration. Often she said to me, 'He will come and rescue us. The Voice tells me so.'"

"The Voice! What do you mean?" Étienne asked.

"Why, she has a conviction of being under direct divine guidance. It is the secret of her courage and serenity. You see, she is something of a mystic. You remember 'the voices' that guided the Maid of Orleans. It seems that you told her, long ago, the story of Joan of Arc, and it made a great impression on her. From that time it has been much in her mind, and we have often talked of it since the Spaniards began their persecution. It would naturally influence a high-strung and imaginative nature. Sometimes I have seen on her face a look of ecstasy, as if she were in actual communion with the unseen."

"What do you think of it, Roland?" Étienne asked very gravely. "Is it hallucination or reality?"

"Ah! Who can tell? Surely, not you or I. Believe me, Étienne, there are things in heaven and earth that our little minds have never dreamed of. Who knows what subtle harmonies, unheard by dull ears, a sensitive nature like hers may catch? Who knows

what insight into things unseen by dull eyes may be given to a soul so high, so spiritually alive, as hers?"

Étienne looked at him in wonder. He had never heard him talk thus.

"You are surprised. Let me tell you, my lad, I owe a great debt to her. She has made religion real and vital to me. My faith, such as it was, sat lightly on me. But as I have seen that slender girl face her enemies both bravely and sweetly, meeting their fury with gentle firmness; as I have seen her, day after day, amid vile surroundings, live a heavenly life, I have said to myself, 'This is reality. No saint in the legends of the Church could surpass this.' So I have come to know that there is such a thing as a life of God in the soul of man."

Étienne said not a word, but with glistening eyes he held out his hand and clasped the other's.

"Yes," Rossignol continued; "she is the heavenliest soul that I ever knew, my mother not excepted. She would have gone to the stake and to the martyr's crown with the same serene smile. In her philosophy death is but a trivial incident. The vital thing for us all, in her view, is oneness with God: and that she has, if ever mortal had.

"What matters it, then, whether the inner light she follows shines into her soul from on high, as she believes, — and I, too, — or flashes up native to her own lofty spirit? If such guidance lead mortal steps on sublime heights, where the brightness of Heaven is around, and where is the blessed company of all the ages, what matters its source? In any case, is it not divine?"

CHAPTER XXXIX

HOME TO FRANCE

"He that has light within his own clear breast."
— MILTON, *Comus*.

ON the mid-Atlantic, a group was seated on the poop-deck of the flag-ship of Dominique de Gourgues's little fleet. The breeze was fine and fair, the sunshine brilliant, and over the glad waters of the dark blue sea the Avenger was speeding to France with the tidings of victory.

The central figure of the group was Canoga. She was dressed in a rich garment, once sent out by Admiral Coligny for a gift to the wife of some native chief. The heavy braids of her shining dark hair were intertwined with native pearls such as she wore on that day when she first visited Étienne alone in the forest of Chicora. Her eyes were bright with returning health, her body was regaining, in the bracing sea-air, its wonted elasticity, and she was surrounded by friends. In her fine self-poise there was all of her old self, and more. What the bitter experiences of two years had taken from her youthfulness they had added to her mature beauty; and the struggle with oppression had stamped her countenance with firmness.

"Behold our Princess!" Rossignol exclaimed, the

first time that she came upon deck, leaning on Étienne's arm.

The title henceforth was hers, as if she had been born to it. She was of those who, through thinking great thoughts, are stamped with an outward and visible sign of greatness. Everywhere her influence reigned. The younger officers at their mess toasted the Princess, envied the happy fellows who were her companions, brushed the deck with their plumed hats when she passed, slowly pacing in the sunshine, leaning on Étienne's or Rossignol's arm, and counted it a happy day when they caught a smile from her. Ruffians, who without a pang had hacked Spaniards to pieces and hanged shrieking wretches to the trees, rose from their dice and stood, cap or morion in hand, when she came near.

Was she happy? None could have answered: she was inscrutable. Towards Étienne her manner was perfect. It corresponded absolutely with all that was implied in their relation of adopted brother and sister. Towards Rossignol she was more demonstrative, allowing herself a certain playful freedom. If this attitude put a strain upon him, he did not let it be suspected.

Every day, when the weather favored, she held her little court on deck, where they chatted or listened to Rossignol read aloud or sing or recite. Now they sat, Gourgues, Étienne, and Rossignol grouped around her, three or four subaltern officers at a little distance, the old Indian attendant leaning against the rail, impassive as a stone image. Rossignol's lute lay beside him.

"Will not Monsieur Rossignol sing?" she asked in her soft, musical voice, pronouncing his name in a way that must have stirred any one not more or less than man.

He took up his lute, fingered it a moment or two musingly, then began. As he went on, her eyes wandered far away, and her bosom heaved with some strong emotion. The theme was the old story of a love that must die unuttered. A squire of low degree, the poet who made the song, loved a great lady. In hourly agony he must wait on her, while she knew nothing of his passion. While he sang the minstrel closely watched Canoga's troubled face. When he concluded, as she withdrew her gaze from the distance, she was startled at the searching glance of those great gray eyes. In a flash of mutual intelligence she knew that he had surprised her secret, and he knew that she knew it.

That night, long after the ship was quiet, Rossignol, wrapped in his cloak, shared the deck with the helmsman and the drowsy figures of the watch, about him the vast silence, with only the swash and surge of the sea and the rustle of canvas or the creaking of a block, overhead the immeasurable steely dome of heaven, with its myriad-fold glitter, and the dull glimmer of the lantern swinging at the Admiral's maintop lighting her consorts' way.

"Ah!" he sighed. "If only I could see those two happy together! But I fear the dear girl's trouble is beyond my power to heal. If Étienne would give me his confidence, I might be of some help. But he is inscrutable as Fate. All the while he acts as if he

were blind as a mole. Can't he see, for all her self-restraint, that her very life and soul are wrapped up in him?"

"After all, is he to marry Félicie? I don't believe it. If he is, why is he so silent about her? Who is she, at any rate? Some commonplace village girl, I'll warrant, while here is this pearl, this incomparable creature, who has more soul than a score of our pale dolls. Not to love her, he must needs be as blind and senseless as this ship's figure-head. And he is not that. No, he is impressible enough. And he certainly cares for her, cares for her a great deal. There is no mistaking the way that he follows her with his eyes. And with what passion he embraced her, at their first meeting!"

Étienne all the while, except when he was with Canoga, was singularly moody. Hour after hour, night after night, he walked the deck alone, above him the sky, fathomless as Destiny; around him the unresting ocean, image of man's troubled existence. Was his life, he asked himself, a little bark, driven, aimless, by irresistible forces? No! Man, too, has his North Star in the heavens, his compass in his keeping. So he hold his course true, Honor at the helm, under darkling skies and over stormy seas he shall come to port at last.

While he paced the deck, Canoga kept vigil below. If Étienne, away from his people, was so silent, so self-contained, what had she to expect, when he should be surrounded by influences stronger than any that she could exert? Were not the sombre warnings of other days coming to their fulfilment?

As she neared the shores of Europe, the figure which her imagination had once conjured up of a pale girl seated at a window in moon-lit Lourdes, sighing for an absent lover, grew more and more distinct.

CHAPTER XL

THE AVENGER'S TRIUMPH

DOMINIQUE DE GOURGUES stood on the high poop-deck of the Admiral, as his little fleet swept into La Rochelle harbor, the vindicated fleurs-de-lis fluttering proudly overhead. Suddenly a cloud of smoke leaped from a shore battery, with the boom of a cannon. Another, and yet others in quick succession.

The stern Avenger smiled. The batteries were saluting! Their fame had outrun the victors. The previous evening, in the dusk, they had been spoken by a swift pinnace off the Isle of Oléron. To her hail, he had answered, "Dominique de Gourgues, returning from chastising Spanish murderers in New France." A shout had followed from the pinnace, and she had scurried away into the darkness bearing the glad news. Now all La Rochelle was astir with the news that the little flotilla, which had been gone so long that it was supposed to have perished, had come back victorious. Right and left cannon were booming from batteries that once held the Protestant stronghold against a Catholic king; and the water-side was a heaving sea of humanity shouting itself hoarse.

The massacre at Fort Caroline had stung Protestant France to the quick; and this was the hour of her

triumph. Where the king had been recreant, a private gentleman, a Gascon, had vindicated the honor of the cause.

Scarcely had the flotilla cast anchor, when a boat brought a deputation of notables to welcome Gourgues and his comrades in arms.

His officers about him, he received with dignity the compliments of the burghers and listened to the reading of an address of congratulation. His reply was terse and soldierly.

"Here, Messieurs, is the seal of our triumph," he concluded, exhibiting a weather-worn board bearing the famous legend once inscribed by Menendez, "Not as to Frenchmen, but as to Lutherans."

"I have replaced it," he added meaningly, "with another—appropriate to the occasion."

A murmur of applause followed. "Now, Messieurs, let us turn to a more agreeable subject," he resumed, leading them to Canoga, who, with Étienne and Rossignol, stood a little apart, serenely watching the scene on deck, the crowded shore, and the busy harbor.

"Behold, Messieurs," he said, taking off his plumed hat and bowing low, "our proudest trophy, a princess of New France, converted to the true religion of Christians, the Protestant faith. She dared alone to withstand the oppressor. We found her chained in a dungeon, under sentence of being burned as a heretic. We rescued her, and she has come to live among a Christian people."

A great outburst of applause followed, and the Rochellese crowded about Canoga. She received the demonstration with a composure that became her

title, smiling on each as, one after another, they bent to kiss her hand. No princess royal could have been more at her ease, no woman sweeter and kinder.

Other introductions followed, and the visitors were soon dispersed among the party gathered on the deck.

"I have a favor to ask of your Highness," said to Canoga an elderly gentleman, whose rich suit of dark velvet betokened the wealthy burgher. "My wife bade me bring home one of this gallant company to be our guest. She will be happy beyond expectation if you will honor our roof with your presence."

Canoga glanced about her with an embarrassed look.

"You must know, Monsieur Ramé," interposed Gourgues quickly, "that these two gentlemen" — indicating Étienne and Rossignol — "are this lady's inseparable companions, her guardians."

"So much the better! Will you gentlemen help to make our party complete?" cried the hospitable burgher.

The invitation was gladly accepted, and the trio, with the old Indian woman, were soon seated in a boat bearing them to the shore.

Pierre Ramé was an admirable example of the best class of Huguenots, equally removed from the bigotry of the narrow sectarian and the cynical indifference of not a few aristocratic partisans. A retired merchant, in easy circumstances, with a mind broadened by reading, he cared little for dogma and loved Protestantism rather as the cause of freedom and tolerance than as a dogmatic faith.

His wife, beautiful in her old age, was a meet partner for such a man. Children there were none.

This hospitable pair would gladly have detained their guests indefinitely; but Étienne was uneasy and anxious to be gone. In the end it was arranged that he should go to Lourdes and return as speedily as possible. To Rossignol he explained that he wished to prepare his father to receive Canoga into their household. He had uncomfortable memories of the minister's lack of enthusiasm about her. But he was hopeful. What prejudice could live in her presence?

When he took leave of her, there was something in her eyes, — not reproach, but sadder and infinitely more appealing, — with a little quiver of her lip, as the image of the golden-haired girl waiting at Lourdes rose before her. Étienne's troubled eyes answered hers.

"It is pitiful," Rossignol said to himself. "What looks between them! Would Heaven I might see the outcome of it!"

CHAPTER XLI

DROWNED GIRL TARN

ONE bright morning Félicie sat over her needlework, crooning the while some verses of a mournful ballad that she had fitted to an old air. She was unspeakably dejected. Nearly a year had passed since Étienne went away, and still there were no tidings of him. Her faith had struggled on bravely at the first, but as month after month went by, and still there was no news, it began to grow faint. Now her own heart at times whispered what Lourdes had loudly said from the first, that she was deserted. She did not, indeed, know what difficulties had beset Étienne's expedition, and that eight full months had been spent before even its destination was reached. She feared that it had perished like Ribaut's.

Now thin, pale, and hollow-eyed, she was a picture of hopelessness. What more did life offer? She would gladly die. It would mean escape from her father incessantly goading her with bitter taunts, from the superciliousness of the villagers, and from her wretched self.

The doorway was darkened, and, looking up and recognizing a one-eyed crone hobbling toward her, she turned pale and trembled, the song dying on her lips. Her mother's agitation was scarcely less.

Fréjette was an old hag who lived in a ruinous hut on the Briancourt lands. She limped over the country gathering simples, dispensed the gossip of the neighborhood, highly spiced with her own malignant comments, sold love-philtres and magic charms, of good or evil potency, as might be desired, and, as a witch of undoubted power, had free admission in every cot. The dread of the evil eye cast on his flock, his crop, or his vines made of the boldest peasant a cringing lout before her. Free meals wherever she went, with the warmest seat in the ingle, were a species of blackmail to which the superstitious country-folk submitted uncomplainingly. Even Bellange would not have dared speak her an uncivil word.

When Félicie looked up and saw this old creature's hawk-like visage, with head cocked on one side and its one evil eye, burning in its deep socket like that of a crafty old bird of prey, fixed upon her, she shivered. Fréjette was intimately associated with all her troubles. Many a secret message she had conveyed to her from Briancourt, in the heyday of his wooing. She it was who had given her the first tidings of his return, when he brought the story of Étienne's infatuated companionship with a brown girl in Florida; and it was her taunting comparison of the disgraced youth with the eager lover waiting to lay wealth at her feet, that secured for Briancourt the first stolen interview. And when he was gone, it was she who, in both the mother's and the daughter's mind, was responsible for the scandalous stories that became current.

"Good morrow, my bonny birdie!" squeaked Fréjette. "What cheer this bright morning? Good,

I know. So blithe a song surely comes from a light heart."

The two women with nervous haste made room for their visitor, while the latter's keen eye scanned the girl closely. Then she settled herself down and opened her budget of neighborhood gossip. Had they heard of Pierre Porchon's daughter's disgrace, and how the young man had fled rather than marry? It served the hussy right.

She had chosen her theme well. The sense of fellowship in misfortune proved wonderfully cheering. Soon the two older ones were laughing merrily, the younger wincing somewhat at the hag's Rabelaisian modes of speech.

Presently Fréjette asked for a cup of water. Félicie was about to rise, but a sharp glance from the old woman's cyclopean eye held her in her seat. Her mother bustled away to get the bowl of milk and hunch of bread and cheese which she rightly understood to be meant.

Then a bony brown claw was thrust out and dropped a scrap of paper in Félicie's lap. She opened it almost mechanically.

The moment her eyes fell upon the writing she turned deadly pale and shook all over, her eyes staring wide and unwinking at the words, "*Meet me to-day at the old hour and the old place. B.*"

A message from the dead, brought by a familiar of Satan!

The old hag quickly dispelled her superstitious terror. Leaning over, she whispered, "He came home last evening, handsomer than ever, and, oh! so brave and

fine! He is a high officer now. So much money! He gave me this (a twinkle of silver in her hand). Such lace! Such jewels! You never saw the like. And burning to see you. Bright and early this morning he knocked at my door. He won't stay beyond to-day. He has great affairs."

While Passion's courier poured her cunning message into her ear, Félicie sat quivering, her eyes dilated, her hands fallen limp in her lap, tossed on a flood of conflicting emotions, on one side amazement, joy, shame, resentment, reawakened love; on the other, love too, but weaker and almost strangled by doubt.

When Bellange mère returned, happily she was too much occupied with her dreaded guest to notice her daughter's agitation, and Félicie had time to master herself. The crone, between munching food and gulping the milk, kept up a constant flow of talk which diverted the mother's attention from the trembling fingers that made a vain show of sewing. But, for all her chatter, her eyes were never off the girl.

Félicie did not need watching. By this time she was quivering with wild joy. He was alive! He had come back! He had sent for her! Then his love was not dead. And he was rich now. Surely he would deliver her from her humiliating situation.

He had left her once, prudence reminded her. Very well. She would take precautions not to expose herself a second time to that experience.

Her mother wondered at the transformation in her. From a nerveless creature she had become animated and brisk, light in her eyes and color in her cheeks.

* * * * * *

About mid-afternoon Félicie opened the cottage gate, cast a quick glance towards the mill, and turned in the direction of the village. She walked rapidly for some distance, with a firm tread and an air of resolution.

It was a glorious day. The air was full of life, and a golden light flooded the vale, while the wooded crests on either hand stood clear-cut against the blue sky.

Presently, where the road was bordered by a thick coppice, she turned from it into a faint trail that crept tortuously up the breast of the hill. Félicie mounted the steep slope with scarcely an abatement of her rapid stride.

When she emerged upon the crest, where only a few straggling stunted trees found a footing amid ledges and thickly-strewn boulders, an entrancing view offered itself. For miles in every direction hilltops and ridges glowed in the splendor of the autumnal sunlight, with deep purple shadows lying between. To the southward the elevations rose gradually to the foot of the Pyrenees, where snowy Mount Perdu towered like a monarch, while Midi and Maladetta stood guard in the distance, in opposite quarters. Behind her the valley basked in the warm glow, and the murmur of the stream that fed the mill, rushing to join the Gave at Lourdes, rose clear in the still air. To the northward, a few houses of the hamlet were visible, and a thin wisp of smoke curled up against the clear sky.

But to all these beauties Félicie was blind. Without a moment's pause she crossed the craggy ridge and plunged into the dense undergrowth lining a singular

bowl-shaped depression into which she descended rapidly.

She soon was in deep shadow, breathing the air that rose damp and deadly chill from the secluded hollow, which the sun never touched save in midsummer, when he hung overhead for a brief while. At the bottom lay a melancholy tarn. With the first view of it Félicie shuddered and caught her lip under her teeth, but still hurried on. A weird place it was, this mournful pool, lying amid dense shadows and walled in by steep rocks. It was reputed bottomless and connected with some hidden fire, because in the depth of winter it never froze, and when the air was coldest a mist rose constantly from its surface.

One day charcoal-burners found, floating there, the ghastly body of a wretched girl who had disappeared some time before. Whether she had sought peace in the depths of the pool or had been flung to her death, none ever knew. It was rumored that Fréjette, if she would, might throw light on the mystery.

From that time forth Drowned Girl Tarn, as the place came to be called, was shunned. One belated wight, whom nightfall had overtaken near it, reached the village in a gibbering frenzy. When he could make himself understood, he declared that a wraith, moaning and wringing its hands, had crossed and recrossed his path all the way up the side of the hollow. The charcoal-burners whose path to the Briancourt woods led this way, made themselves another route, and now no foot of mortal was supposed to tread it.

Not the associations of the spot, however, but memory made Félicie shudder. The black pool lay

before her like a Stygian gulf, separating her forever from the days of her innocence. What passionate moments it had witnessed! What sighs, what tears, what fleeting raptures! What vain pleadings, what bitter reproaches!

In another moment Bertrand de Briancourt, handsomely dressed in velvet and lace ruffles, rushed towards her with extended arms, his face alight with ecstasy.

"Félicie!" he cried.

"Stop! Not a step nearer!" Therewith she flashed out a dagger and held it at arm's length, grasped firmly.

Briancourt stood stock-still in amazement. "What! You threaten me, Félicie?"

"Oh, no! Not you, Bertrand! Myself." Her voice broke an instant, but she rallied herself. "This dagger is meant for my own heart."

"What madness is this, Félicie?" he asked loftily, taking a step forward.

"Stop! Come a foot nearer, and I make an end of myself at once."

"Tell me, dearest, what does all this mean?" he asked, driven to cajolery.

"Listen to me, Bertrand. You said you loved me, and you won my heart. For you I flung away all the world. If I had thrown myself into this bottomless pool, I should have fared no worse. You forsook me—"

"Ah, Félicie—" Briancourt broke in pleadingly.

"Let me speak," she cried passionately. "It is my turn now. Yes, you left me to my shame, while

you went your way, to win other fools' hearts. You hang your head. Well you may. Ah God! You can never dream what I have suffered for you, in having my name bandied about in every hovel."

Never had she seemed to Briancourt so worth possessing as now, when she stood before him with flashing eyes and knit brows, panting with excitement. Was this the Félicie whom he had last seen on her knees, clasping her arms about him until he tore himself away and left her prostrate on this very spot? Was this splendid creature lost to him?

"Is all over, then, between us, Félicie?" he asked dejectedly.

The note of tenderness touched her. She paused.

"Have you no love for me, Félicie?" he continued softly.

"No love for you, Bertrand! Can you ask it? Yes; I love you as I ought to hate you. What other man have I ever loved? What other man can I love? Have not I flung away my life for you?"

"You still love me, Félicie!" he cried, starting forward with arms outstretched.

"Stop! Not a foot nearer, if you value my life!" Again she pointed the dagger towards her breast.

"What do you mean?" he cried, in fresh bewilderment.

"I mean that I will die before I let my love bring me new shame. Tell me, Bertrand, do you love me?"

"With all my heart, Félicie."

"On your honor?"

"I swear it."

"Enough to take me on my own terms?"

"It is all I ask. Name them."

"Listen, then. I must have some assurance for the future. What can you offer?"

"Will you fly with me, darling?" he cried eagerly.

"Willingly, Bertrand, if — Have you considered what this means? To me it means that I shall cling to you for weal or woe. You are rich now and can set up a home. I will brighten it. I will make it the sweetest spot on earth to you. Do you offer this? If you do, I am yours. If you mean less, speak out and let us part at once."

What a rare piece of good fortune had come his way! To possess this beautiful creature as his own, without need of concealment, to have her share his lodgings, to parade her before his envious comrades! The picture she drew looked suspiciously like marriage. But he would not let a trifle stand in his way.

"All that you have said, darling, I mean," he cried. "Nothing less, on my honor. You shall be mine and I yours forever. Now, sweetest, may I take you in my arms?"

"Softly! What pledge do you offer?"

"My oath, the oath of a good Catholic."

"A Catholic!" she exclaimed. The word had come to stand in her imagination for a larger, brighter world than little Calvinistic Lourdes. "You were always such a strenuous soldier, how could you desert the cause?"

"I did not, so long as there was a glimmer of hope. I fought, not as a Protestant, but as a Frenchman and a soldier. After we had all been shipwrecked,

when others surrendered — among them, Ribaut himself — and were put to death — "

"Until this morning, when old Fréjette brought me your note, I believed you were among them. The story that came here was that not a single soul escaped. How did you?"

"You see, when others surrendered, some of us swore that we would die first. That proved to be our salvation. We marched away and down the coast for several days. While we were trying to build a vessel out of timbers gathered from the wrecks of our ships, the Spaniards suddenly came upon us in force. They summoned us to surrender and promised not to harm one of us. Our last throw had been made and lost. So we gave up the game. And they kept their word. They took us all to their fort at St. Augustine. They treated us very decently, and we gentlemen were invited to eat at the governor's table. It was given out that all who chose to be baptized as Catholics would receive good employment. Some of our party said that there was not any use of sticking to a sinking ship. So they gave in and were baptized. I still held out — "

"Foolish fellow! When was it, then, that you turned Catholic?"

"Some time afterwards. Those of us who refused were clapped on board a ship bound for Spain, to work in the galleys. It was not a cheerful prospect, and on the voyage I had a chance of thinking the whole matter over. There was a Jesuit priest on board who took a particular interest in me. Many a talk we had together, and, pardi! his arguments

were stronger than I could answer. The most convincing of all was the failure of the Huguenot cause. In every battle we had been beaten. It certainly looks as if God is on the side of the Catholics. The upshot of it all was that I gave in and was baptized."

"And the world has gone well with you since?"

"Beautifully! So soon as I made the change I was taken out of the prisoners' den in the hold and given the freedom of the ship, with a seat at the officers' table. When I landed in Spain I was hospitably entertained, and when I left I had a letter in my pocket commending me to the Duke of Guise. In his service I have prospered—" he glanced complacently down at his velvet clothes and bejeweled fingers. "He appreciates a man of my sort, and he has made me a captain in his body-guard. Now there is a truce, and I have taken advantage of it to come to see you, my girl. There is no other power under Heaven that would have brought me back to this wretched hole. How much longer are you going to hold me at your dagger's point?"

Félicie tossed her head, very proud and happy, but she was not to be beguiled from her purpose by fair words.

"So you want me to go away with you?" she said, feeling her way.

"Yes, and make me the happiest man in the world."

"On my own terms?"

"Surely. Name them."

"Marriage."

His face fell instantly. "But," he stammered,

"there is nobody to marry us except that old Pastor Cazenove."

"Oh, don't think of him!" she cried, in confusion.

"Besides, I would not be married by a heretic parson," he continued airily, "and there is not a priest within a hundred miles."

"Then, Bertrand, will you promise me that if I go away with you— Mind! I do not say I will, but *if* I do, you will marry me as soon as we can find a priest?"

His face brightened instantly. "Surely I will," he cried with alacrity.

"You solemnly swear it? Remember you are asking me to trust you the same as if we were actually married."

"I swear it," he said with composure.

"On your honor?"

"On my honor."

"As a gentleman and a Catholic?"

"As a gentleman and a Catholic." His eyes met hers without the quiver of an eyelid.

"Then what do you want me to do?"

"Fly with me to-night."

"Impossible! To-morrow, at the earliest—if I go."

"*If!* Why, you have promised."

"No, no, Bertrand dear," she said, with a new note of tenderness. "I can't take this step so lightly. I must consider it."

"My God! How you tantalize me!" he cried passionately. "What am I to understand?"

"That if I am going with you, I shall meet you here

to-morrow just before dark. You can have horses at hand?"

"Surely. And this half-way promise is all that you can give me?"

"The utmost. O Bertrand, you do not understand," she said with feeling.

"And if you change your mind?" he asked.

"You will know that it breaks my heart." Her quivering voice attested her words.

"Then I suppose I must be content," he muttered sullenly. Then, brightening, he said, advancing, "Now, love, let me take you in my arms."

"Not a step nearer!" she cried, retreating, pale but firm. "O Bertrand, I would love to kiss you. But I don't dare trust myself. Besides, I must go. It is growing late."

"Let me go a little way with you."

"Not a foot!"

"Till to-morrow then!"

"Till to-morrow, if—" Waving him a graceful adieu, she turned and hastened away.

Watching her disappear amid the shadows he chuckled, saying softly to himself, "No fear but you will come, my girl." Then, with an ugly grin, he added, "So, little jade, you would marry a Briancourt!"

* * * * * *

When Félicie went to her room that evening she glanced around at the familiar objects. "Am I really looking at them for the last time?" she said to herself.

She had left Briancourt and had hurried home,

buoyant with the thought of escape from her intolerable situation, of realizing her old dream of living far away with her aristocratic lover, nay, her husband. She had entered her home with color in her cheeks and a sparkle in her eyes.

Now, in the stillness of the night, surrounded by dear, familiar things, her spirits sank at the thought of going out from the security of her home, relying on Briancourt's pledges. What if he was lying, as he had lied to her before? What if he should desert her? Abandonment away from home meant a deeper degradation than any she had yet experienced. It meant the one refuge of an outcast girl, the street.

Away with the thought of such madness! But stop! What was the other alternative? To stay at home; still to eat her heart in shame; still to wait and wait for one who might never come again. Oh, that he had never gone away! Then this cruel trial could not have come upon her. How secure she felt with him by her side! No harm could befall, when his arm was about her.

She seemed still to hear his last promise, "Surely, dear, as I live." Better his simple word than Briancourt's oaths. Oh, she knew he would come, even through fire and water — if it were possible to mortal. If she could but know that he was alive, she would stand resolute in her lot, firm in her faith. But more than twice the time that should have amply sufficed for the voyage had gone by, and still there were no tidings of him. Was it not likeliest that he lay under the ocean or on the sands of Florida?

How gentle and noble he looked, as in imagination

she saw him now! Every shadow of suspicion, every cloud of jealousy of Canoga that had ever risen in her mind, had vanished, and he stood as the ideal man, the one to whom she would gladly pin her faith for all time — if she could but know that he was living.

But should she sacrifice her life to a sentiment, — to a memory, it might be? Briancourt, with all his faults, was flesh and blood, and he was at hand. She loved him, too — yes, passionately; had loved him for years. He was the embodiment of the things that, until she felt Étienne's influence, she had most admired and cherished. He had money now and was inviting her to share the life that she once dreamed of as the ideal good — yes, to share it as his wife. He had sworn it.

Why, then, be so timorous? Why not throw away doubt and boldly stake all on this venture? If she lost, she would at least have had her fling. But it was mean to think so poorly of Bertrand's honor. Had he not atoned for his fault by coming back for her?

The long night had dragged by, and now the gray dawn admonished her that she must be astir. And still she was undecided.

All the while, like a ship hove to between baffling winds, dragged by an undercurrent, the tendencies and habits of her life, the admirations she had cherished, the dreams she had indulged, were steadily pulling her.

CHAPTER XLII

VOICES IN THE NIGHT

At dusk one evening Étienne rode into Pau on his way to Lourdes. He ate his supper and went to bed early. But he was too much disturbed to sleep.

Now that he was nearing home, the difficulties of his situation pressed him incessantly. First was that as to Canoga. Would his father be won to look upon her more favorably than he had been accustomed to think of her? He hoped it. But theological prejudice is a stubborn thing, and at his father's age convictions are not easily changed.

But the real trouble, the one that lay at his heart night and day, was as to Félicie. He had striven to be loyal to her, not in word and act only, but in thought. And in the main he had succeeded. Since their first meeting no word or gesture had been allowed to betray his feeling for Canoga. Both in her presence and away from her, he had endeavored to hold himself free from the spell of her charm. But it was vain to try to hide from himself that she was the mistress of his heart, that she alone satisfied, yes, more than satisfied his ideal.

Poor Félicie! At her best and sweetest, how commonplace she seemed in comparison with her whose

image he could not banish, and whose unfathomable eyes had followed him ever since they parted! Within a few hours he must meet Félicie. What would be the result of that meeting who could divine? Who could surmise the issue of his dreadful perplexity? He was sure of but one thing, that he would be loyal to his duty, loyal to the poor girl who had given her heart to him. Even now he seemed to hear that last agonized entreaty that he would come back to her.

After a time he fell into a troubled sleep, haunted still by visions of Félicie's tear-stained face. Suddenly he was aroused by the sound of hoofs clattering in the courtyard. Then a man called sharply for the hostler.

That voice! Somehow it vaguely associated itself with painful memories. In a moment he was on his feet and at the window, peering into the darkness below.

Two persons dismounted, and one, of slighter figure, hung back while the master, as he seemed, came forward and gave a succession of sharp raps on the door with the pommel of his sword.

The hour was late, the guests abed, and the noise echoed through the silent inn. Clearly the stranger was not a man to concern himself about the comfort of others. Then he turned and shouted again loudly for the hostler.

"Here, Excellency! Here!" cried the poor varlet, clattering down from the loft where he slept, and running breathless to the spot.

"Curse you, lazy scoundrel! How dare you keep me waiting thus? Take these horses and groom

them well. They have had a hard gallop. If they seem the worse for it in the morning you shall have a flogging for your breakfast."

If Briancourt were not toiling in the Spanish galleys, Étienne would have been willing to declare that the stranger was he. His rasping tones, his truculence, his airs of a great lord, — all were there.

By this time the landlord, trembling before his guest's wrath, was fumbling at the bolt of the door. He threw it open and bowed obsequiously to the newcomers, murmuring his apologies. The light of his candle feebly illumined the foremost stranger's figure, his face being hidden from above by the broad brim of his plumed hat.

As the host held aloft his candle, it lighted the face of Étienne eagerly hanging out of his low window and trying to make out the newcomer. The boyish figure in the shadow — a page, he thought — looking up, saw him, started, and gave a smothered sound, half sob, half cry, that sounded startlingly like "Étienne!"

"The dogs are all asleep, it seems, in this kennel of yours," continued the other, absorbed in bullying the landlord.

"A thousand pardons, Excellency! The hour is late, and I did not expect more guests," the man faltered.

"Enough! You keep a gentleman waiting a half-hour at your door and then come mumbling your idiotic excuses. Hark ye! If some of your Calvinistic vermin that infest these parts should be hanged, it would be a wholesome lesson. And, mark me! the time is coming."

It was all in the Briancourt manner. Étienne went back to his bed. But sleep was banished. That strange boy's half-stifled cry depressed him singularly. There was a note of mystery, even of tragedy in it.

There were sounds of movement down-stairs. Probably the truculent guest was supping. Then Étienne heard steps pass his door. He easily recognized the shuffling of the host's slippered feet, the heavy tread of the man, and the lighter step of his companion.

The remainder of the night Étienne tossed on his bed, full of anxious thoughts. He rose early and departed for Lourdes.

CHAPTER XLIII

CROSSING THE BAR

ARRIVED in Lourdes, Étienne hastened to his home and into his father's study, with the thought of surprising him. It was vacant, and there was no fire on the hearth. He turned away, wondering, and went out into the hall. A door opened on the upper floor, and Nannette, the faithful old servant, came to the head of the landing.

At the sight of him she threw up her arms and, with a half-uttered cry and a gesture of warning, beckoned him to come up. In another moment he stood in his father's room.

The minister lay on his bed, how changed! In the drawn and distorted features scarcely anything was recognizable but the eyes. In them the son read welcome, joy, love.

"Oh! my Father, my dear Father!" he cried; "if I had dreamed of this!"

The stricken man tried painfully to frame words, but made only meaningless sounds. It was too shocking, and the young man threw himself on his father's breast and, cheek to cheek, wet the poor distorted face with his tears. Presently he felt a feeble hand stealing to his and stroking it softly.

These two had been to each other not only

father and son, but as mother and daughter. And now plainly it was not to be for long.

When Étienne lifted himself and looked through his tears, the dumb message of the eyes following him everywhere was inexpressibly touching. There was no reproach in them, but only the fulness of satisfied love. They seemed to say, "I have waited only for this. Now, Lord, let thy servant depart in peace."

He brought the Bible and said, "Shall I read to you, Father?" The eyes gave a glad assent. Then holding the wasted hand in his, he read the words that have comforted so many souls on the verge of the great departure, beginning, "The Lord is my Shepherd."

So absorbed was Étienne in caring for his father that it was only on the second day that he asked Nannette about the family at the mill. "Tell me, Nannette," he said; "how is Félicie?"

"Oh my boy, my poor boy!" she exclaimed, throwing up her hands.

"What is it, Nannette?" he cried, springing up.

"Oh my poor child! She is gone!"

"What do you say? Gone?"

"Yes. Fled with the Briancourt!"

"It cannot be! Not Bertrand de Briancourt? He is a galley-slave in Spain."

"None other. I saw him once myself with my own eyes, the arrogant creature, with his haughty air and his plumed hat, riding through the village. The very next day Félicie disappeared."

The strangers in the inn at Pau flashed into Étienne's

mind. Félicie a wanton! Oh, no, it could not be! Surely she was deceived and betrayed. The half-stifled cry he heard was her heart's instinctive appeal to him. Poor girl! Too late to save her now.

"Oh! he is a terrible man, that Bellange!" Nannette continued. "He came here, and such a frightful scene as he made! He went into the study where the master was, and shut the door. Still, in the kitchen I could hear his voice, loud and angry, but I did not catch the words. Once, it seemed, the master tried to say something, but the other drowned his voice. I was frightened. While I was wondering what to do, the door of the study opened and the miller came out. What a sight he was! His eyes were bloodshot and looked like coals of fire, and his jaws worked as if he were chewing something. He made me think of a huge gray wolf that my father caught, one bitter winter, when I was a little girl, in a trap near the sheepfold."

"Did you hear anything of what he said to Father?"

"Only what he said after he had come out of the study. He turned back, shook his fist at my poor master, and said, 'I leave you my curse, foolish old man, who have done all this mischief.' With that he stamped to the door, flung it open, and strode away."

"Oh Nannette, Nannette! it was he, then, that brought this stroke on my father?"

"Yes, it was his violence."

"How soon did this trouble come on?"

"That same night. At the first the master sat all in a heap, as if lightning had fallen upon him. He

was as pale and cold as death, and said never a word. There he sat and sat. When it was supper-time, he would not touch a morsel, he would not stir. All the evening I sewed in the kitchen, and he sitting there all the while, like a statue of stone. At last I pleaded and coaxed, until he went to bed. In the morning he did not come down. I went to the door and knocked. There was no answer. Then I went in, and, behold! he was just as you see him now."

Félicie gone, Étienne was free. But at what a price! He pictured the degradation that surely awaited the misguided girl and felt that his release was all too dearly bought. The question of marriage forever eliminated, he could think of her as a sister. Tender, sad memories of childhood days when they played together and read off the same page, overwhelmed him with sorrow.

Had she always loved Briancourt, and was her affection for himself a pretense? He could not believe it. Poor girl! No doubt she had been lonely, disheartened, despairing of his return, and Briancourt had taken advantage of her dejection.

CHAPTER XLIV

LIGHT AT EVENING

THE old minister was slowly dying. Day after day Étienne sat by his side, holding his wasted hand and reading from the Bible, sorrowfully watching the weak flame of life flicker out. What deepened his grief was the thought of his father's rooted disapproval of Canoga. As to himself, the scriptural barriers that once seemed insuperable had fallen, like the fabled walls of Jericho, at the mere summons of reason. Félicie by her own act had released him. There remained only his father's objections. Calculation pleaded, "Do not disturb him. Let him die in peace." A finer spirit urged him to win his father's approval, if it was to be had. How happy he would be in carrying to Canoga that dear parent's last blessing! He could not let him pass into the great Beyond with a false image of her in his mind.

"Father," he said, taking the old man's hand, "you remember the Indian girl who saved my life and nursed me at Charles Fort?"

A troubled look overspread the distorted face, as he nodded assent.

"We found her at Fort Caroline."

The lines of the forehead became knit.

"And we have brought her with us to France."

The look deepened to one of pain.

"Oh, Father, indeed, indeed you wrong her, because you do not know her," Étienne cried. Then he told the story of her heroic stand for her faith.

As he spoke, the look of trouble changed to one of surprise, then of perplexity. Was a new light dawning?

"Father, I love her, love her with all my heart. She is the noblest, sweetest, purest of women; and I am the most miserable of men, if indeed God forbids my love. But I cannot believe it," he cried.

Already he breathed more freely, the great confession made. So he went on, telling brokenly the story of his love, how it had stolen upon him unawares, how, when he became conscious of it, he fought it, but all in vain, the constant appeal of Canoga's sweetness overmastering him; and how, when he found her under sentence of death for her faith, bound though he was to Félicie, a passion of tenderness almost overcame him.

Still the father made no sign.

They sat there a long time in the gathering dusk, Étienne's head bowed on his father's hand, breaking the silence only when he detailed some circumstance of his relation with Canoga. Once he said, "I cannot believe that God has given her so much beauty, so much goodness and grace, and yet has fixed a great gulf between us. Is it, can it be? It seems incredible. Do you yourself believe it, Father?"

The hand he clasped held his in a long pressure. Was it encouragement? Or was it only sympathy?

They relapsed into silence, the shadows of evening slowly gathering about them. After a time Étienne raised himself softly. Was his father asleep? Ap-

parently not, though he had closed his eyes. The son resumed his attitude. Nannette brought in a candle. An hour passed, and then another, and still another, in utter silence, the old minister lying motionless, shut in with his thoughts. At last Étienne, worn out with many nights' watching, could no longer bear the awful, dumb suspense. He called Nannette to relieve him for a time, went to his own room, threw himself on his bed, and soon slept heavily.

He lay in a deep, dreamless slumber when he was aroused by a light hand laid upon him. It was Nannette. "The master wants you," she said.

He sprang up and hastened to his father's side. In the dim light of early morning his face was deathly haggard. Étienne felt that the great departure was near. His father felt it too. And there was a singularly wistful look on his face, as if something pressed to be told or to be done while yet there was time.

"Is it this, Father?" Étienne asked, following the direction of the eager eyes and laying his hand on the Bible. A nod answered him. He brought the book. Undoubtedly his father wished him to read, it might be about the green pastures over the river. But no; the left hand was feebly raised. He wanted the book himself. Étienne held it near to him, spread open in his hands, as on a book-rest.

A singular picture it was in the dim, gray dawn wanly lighting the chamber of death: Nannette bending over with the candle in her hand, its sickly yellow rays reflected in the three pale faces, Étienne holding the book at the level of his father's eyes, the old minister turning the pages with trembling haste.

All the night he had lain in deep thought, fighting a battle with the convictions of a lifetime. At last — was he dreaming or waking? — as he lay in a dark chamber, suddenly it was illumined by light that streamed from a golden legend arching the room. Now he was seeking the words in the Bible.

He has found the page. Étienne followed the trembling, palsied finger as it moved down, till it suddenly stopped, and the speaking eyes were lifted to his.

He turned the book to himself and read, "He hath made OF ONE BLOOD all nations of men."

"You mean it, Father? God approves? Then you approve?" he cried, almost incredulous.

Pastor Cazenove nodded, the poor, worn face bright with joy. The light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world had dispelled the last lingering shadow. In that supreme revelation the old minister owned God's children everywhere, one world-wide family.

In an ecstasy, Étienne threw himself on his father's breast. Nannette went softly away, leaving them to their new-found joy, and the first ray of sunlight fell upon the two mingling happy tears in a silence more eloquent than speech.

The great illumination lighted the old pastor's steps through the Dark Valley. The rest of the day he lay on his pillow, with a look on his face that spoke of perfect peace.

As the shadows of evening were gathering he passed the bourne as softly as a ship drifting across the bar with a full tide, in a deep calm.

CHAPTER XLV

"HEAVEN ITSELF WOULD STOOP TO HER"

A WEEK later Étienne rode into La Rochelle. He had been gone more than a month.

When he entered Pierre Ramé's house the first person to meet him was Rossignol.

"Why have you been so long away?" said the minstrel. "What has happened? Something unusual, I see. Come this way and tell me all." He drew him to a window-seat.

Étienne told of his father's death and received Rossignol's brotherly sympathy. When he went on to speak of Félicie's flight, his friend started.

"You had never suspected any truth in the stories about her? Never investigated them?" he asked, in a tone that expressed amazement.

"I could not have been guilty of the meanness of inquiring of others about her conduct. It would not have accorded with my ideas of friendship. I believed that she had been foully slandered, and I was glad to show my faith in her before all the world. Soon interest in her behalf developed a stronger feeling. I thought that I should never see Canoga again, my heart was heavy, and Félicie was always gentle and sympathetic. I knew my father's dearest wish, and, in short, I asked her to be my wife."

"Of course you loved her, then?"

"Yes, I really loved her — in a sober, unimpassioned way. Unless you knew what fearful depression I passed through, you would not be able to understand how I was drawn to the one being who entered into my troubles with fellow-feeling."

"But all the while she was shamefully deceiving you."

"No, no! Never tell me that! I will not hear a word against her honor from anybody, even from you, Roland. I believe that her feeling for me was genuine, and I pity far more than I blame her."

"How do you account for her going away so easily with Briancourt?" Rossignol asked coldly.

"Who says that she went away easily? There is no evidence of it, and I do not believe it. I fear that my prolonged absence was indirectly instrumental in her downfall. Poor girl! I know what she must have suffered from her father and from the tattle of the villagers. Then, in her dejection, came that double-dyed villain with his dishonorable proposals, no doubt representing that I should never return, and holding out alluring promises, probably of marriage. To escape misery at home she went away, alas! to greater misery.

Rossignol mused, looking at him with that inscrutable expression which his face sometimes wore towards his young friend.

After a while he said, "At all events, you are free now."

"Yes, poor Félicie has set me free."

Rossignol was silent a moment or two. Then he said gravely, "Canoga is not well."

Étienne started. The other's eyes were turned upon him full of meaning, of the kind they once expressed, on that memorable day when he witnessed the meeting between Étienne and Canoga in the guard-house at Fort Caroline.

"Your prolonged absence," he presently continued, "has perplexed us all, seeing that you went away expecting to return speedily. She has been troubled most of all."

Étienne was gazing unseeing into the street.

The door opened, and, starting from his reverie, he saw Canoga enter the room.

"Canoga!" he exclaimed, springing toward her.

With a little cry of joy she came to meet him, both hands extended. She was thinner, and her eyes looked larger because of deep circles, but they glowed with all the old affection.

In a moment the two were seated side by side. When they looked around for Rossignol he was gone. They talked long. He told her of his father's illness and death, and she took his hand and looked into his eyes, hers full of sympathy.

"Dearest," he said tenderly, "my father's last thought was of you and me. Yes, we were united in his heart."

She started and looked at him with open-eyed wonder.

"I had told him what, until now, I have not told you — in words, at least; and I bring you his blessing. I love you, dear, with all my heart. Will you be my wife?"

"Oh, no, no, no! I cannot! I dare not!"

"What hinders, love? You are free, and I am free."

"But no! I am not free. I must obey."

"Obey! Whom?"

"The Voice, Etayan. Sometimes it comes to me in the wind. Sometimes I hear it in the roar of the sea, sometimes in the murmur of the pines. And what it says is always true."

"Then it has told you that I love you, that I have loved you ever since those precious days in Chicora."

"No, Etayan dear," — she shook her head sadly — "it tells me quite otherwise. You love me, not as a wife should be loved, but as a sister. How often you have called me 'sister!' And now you are sorry for me because I am not strong. And so you would give yourself to poor Canoga."

"Oh, no! A thousand times, no! I love you with all my heart. It is I who beg you to give yourself to me, who am not worthy of you."

She shook her head incredulously.

"No, no! It cannot be. You shall not sacrifice yourself for me."

"Why will you talk thus? Will you not believe me when I tell you that I love you wholly? That I never have loved any but you? There was a time when I was bound to another" — she started. "Yes, of that I shall speak at another time. Enough that, even then, the thought of you was with me always. But now I am free, wholly free to tell you that only you can satisfy my heart."

She shook her head sadly. Presently she said, "Listen to me, Etayan dear. Let me tell you of the

Voice. It came to me first when we lived at Charles Fort. It was one evening. We had sat long by the hearth where the logs crackled, and you had talked of the old, old days, the days of brave men and fair women. When I left you and went to my cabin, my heart was all aglow. Then the Voice came in the night wind. It said: 'Love not, Canoga! Love not, simple maid! Love is a flame that consumes.' Often and again it came, always warning me. On our journey from Charles Fort, it was with me day and night, sometimes in the swaying treetops, sometimes in the sighing wind, sometimes in the murmur of the sea. The sea said, 'As I am, immeasurable, pitiless, so is Love.' And the wind said, 'As I am, boisterous, not to be bound, so is Love.' And the whispering treetops said, 'As we are, dumb ourselves, making music only at the wind's will, so is she that loves.'"

"A prophecy, dearest! The master, the wind, is Love. The Voice would tell you how, letting it breathe upon you, you will pour out the music of your soul. Heed it, Canoga dear!"

"It cannot, cannot be," she said sadly. "The Voice gave me other warnings. You remember the last night of that journey, how we stood on a sea-beach, and the moon was full, and the ocean was all silvered over? You were gazing far away, in deep thought, and the Voice whispered to me standing by your side, 'He sees the moonlight flooding the place where she lives, the pale girl whom he loves.'"

"Proof that the Voice may be mistaken! I was thinking of you, dearest, only of you, and grieving that our sweet life alone together must soon end."

"Can it be?" she cried, fixing on him her great eyes, full of wonder, almost of incredulity.

"Surely, dear! You do not deny that you love me?"

"Deny it!" she cried, with kindling eyes. "Deny my love for you! I glory in it. It is my life. Has it not redeemed me?"

"Then, dearest, you accept my love?" He bent over her, taking her hand and kissing it again and again.

She surrendered it to him, still shaking her head.

"No, Etayan, dear. Be patient! I must hear what the Voice says. Has it not been my faithful guide through the dark days when I lay in the Spanish prison? It said to me, 'Fear not, Canoga: He will come.' And, lo! you came."

"And if it change? If it bid you accept my love? You will obey?"

"Oh, gladly! It knows best."

"Then to the Voice I appeal. My love shall win it to my side. Then you will be mine!"

He bent over, and their lips met for the first time.

Coming out, Étienne met Rossignol pacing back and forth, pale and wearing a strangely tense look.

"What cheer?" he asked hoarsely.

"I may hope." His manner said more than his words.

"You mean—?" Rossignol asked breathlessly.

"She does not repel me,—as she well might. Oh, Roland!" he went on, in a sudden burst of confidence, "I love her, love her with all my heart. You must have seen it. And she loves me. But—"

"But what?" the other broke in, almost fiercely, seizing his friend's shoulder with a grip that made him wince.

Étienne looked up, wondering. "The Voice —" he began.

"Thank God!" Rossignol exclaimed fervently. "The Voice will plead for you, as — as I gladly would." Then he stopped short and strode away.

"Dear fellow!" Étienne said to himself, following him with his eyes. "How strangely abrupt he is! Who would have dreamed that sympathy could agitate him so deeply?"

CHAPTER XLVI

"A DREAM WHICH WAS NOT ALL A DREAM"

THE next day Canoga met Étienne with arms outstretched, a soft light in her eyes.

Leading him to a seat beside her, she said, "I had a dream last night, dear, that repeated an experience in Chicora. Do you remember how, as we journeyed from Charles Fort, we came one day, in the heat of noon, upon a sweet little brook, and followed it to the cool fountain-head and drank of the delicious water?"

Étienne nodded. How vivid was that scene in his memory — the towering pines, the dim woodland light, the water welling up softly in its sandy bed, then purling away to lose itself in the shadows, and they two, alone in the world, standing by the rill!

"And do you remember, I said something I did not mean to say, and it troubled you? But, ah! in those days, though I deceived you with a cheerful face, my heart was heavy, for it was ever saying to me, 'When we reach his people, you will lose him.'"

Étienne caught his breath. *Then* she feared to lose him!

A tremulous light in her eyes answered to his thought. She resumed, "I said, you remember, that the little brook flowing in the shadowy woods to lose itself in the ocean was a picture of my life. At that

time you said nothing: you only looked troubled. But this time you objected. 'Not so,' you said. 'Let us trace its course and see.'

"So we followed it. And lo! it came out into a sunny meadow, bright with flowers, where it joined another brook and went singing on its way."

"Happy augury!" Étienne cried, leaning towards her.

She resumed, a little tremulously, "Then I awoke, and while I lay wondering, the Voice said, low and clear, 'Canoga, the dark days are past. The little brook of sweet water shall flow no more in the shadowy woods, but in the sunshine.' And so—"

She broke off, with a great sigh of yearning, her arms outstretched. Then for two souls the whole of life and eternity was sphered in a single instant of rapture.

From that moment Canoga's whole being responded to the inspirations of love. Every breath was a delight. Health quickly came back to her frame, vigor and elasticity to her step.

The lovers' bliss was infectious. It pervaded the atmosphere of the household. Rossignol, at the earliest moment, dashed off a letter to Madame Marcel giving the joyful news. His spirits were electric. The doleful "*Mais où est le preux Charlemagne?*" was heard no more, but at most unexpected moments his voice pealed out, like an organ,

> "*Peuple debout! Chante ta délivrance,*
> *Noël! Noël! Voici le Redempteur!*"

The marriage-day was set for a month later. Just

now the occasion of the greatest importance was the baptism of Canoga. Pierre Ramé was deeply interested in giving it publicity. As a leading burgher of the great Protestant stronghold he was widely acquainted with the Huguenot leaders, and he sent invitations to many of them to witness the ceremony.

The story of Étienne and Canoga was told everywhere, and the Indian girl who had dared alone to maintain her faith in the face of Spanish persecution, instantly became the heroine of Protestant France. The touching idyll in the forests of Chicora was talked of in camp and château, over the artisan's bench and at the burgher's board. It appealed to the chivalry of the Gallic nature, and its ideal beauty charmed an age familiar with license.

When the day came, much of Huguenot France was there, to witness the ceremony. There was the gallant Châtillon, as the representative of his father, Admiral Coligny; and there was Étienne's earliest commander, Baron d'Audaux, who brought a cordial message from the Queen of Navarre. There was Dominique de Gourgues, who had left the seclusion of Mont de Marsan, where the King's wrath kept him almost a prisoner, to do honor to the Princess. And the good city of La Rochelle was present, by a deputation of its chief burghers.

So, before this high company, while church-bells rang, Canoga stood up, serene, avowed the Christian faith, and was baptized into the Church.

Before the ceremony she came to Étienne with something carefully wrapped in a deerskin cover. He opened it and found his own Bible, the book out

of which he had taught her to read, that had lain between them in the firelight many an evening in Chicora, that had been all her library, her guide, and counselor, and her comforter in prison.

The eyes of both were moist as she said to him softly, "Ask the minister to read from it."

A few days after the baptism Rossignol came to the two young people, full of excitement and radiantly happy.

"A letter from Madame Marcel!" he cried. "I wrote her immediately the news of your betrothal, and she writes that she is very happy over it. And now she wants — guess what."

"Dear soul! She wishes us to visit her, after our marriage?"

"No, *before*, my lad!" Rossignol cried, slapping him on the shoulder, in an ecstasy which the occasion scarcely seemed to warrant. "She insists that you are to be married in her house, nowhere else."

Étienne and Canoga exchanged quick glances of perplexity.

Rossignol ran on rapidly, "She says that she cannot come to the wedding, and therefore the wedding must come to her; that there is not any place so fit as the house in which your parents were married."

"What a lovely thought!" said Étienne. "But think of our generous friends here. They are making every preparation, and they expect us to be married in their house."

"All that is provided for," Rossignol urged. "The same messenger brought a letter to Monsieur Ramé inviting him and his wife to go with us."

"Have you talked with them about it?" Étienne asked, in surprise.

"Yes, and they are willing — if you are."

There was something inexplicable about Rossignol's eager insistence and the suspicious alacrity of the Ramés. The latter consideration, indeed, left no choice. It was decided to accept Madame Marcel's invitation.

Accordingly, in due time the whole party set out. They followed the same route which, six years before, Étienne had traveled alone, on that journey that had had so momentous consequences. Now he was surrounded by friends. Then the country was torn by civil war. Now it was at peace, and the Huguenots — for the time — in great consideration.

CHAPTER XLVII

IN THE HOUSE OF HIS FATHERS

"Bells are ringing, and horns are blown,
And the Baron hath come again to his own."
— LONGFELLOW, *The Baron of St. Castine.*

A JOYFUL welcome awaited the travelers. Madame Marcel embraced Étienne with glistening eyes, then held him at arm's length and exclaiming, "What a man my boy has grown. And how proud I am of him!" hugged him again and again.

Madeleine looked handsomer and nobler than ever, and Marguerite was not less bright and sweeter even than of old.

Towards Canoga the three were very tender and affectionate.

"How distinguished-looking she is!" said Marguerite.

"And so gentle-mannered," Madeleine added.

"Did you ever hear such speech?" said their mother. "It is as musical as song."

There, also, to greet the travelers was Provost André Marcel, who, six years before, had brought Rossignol and Étienne to this house.

Soon the company sat down to dinner. A very happy party it was, and very proud was Madame

Marcel, with her "boy" seated at her right, and his chosen wife at her left.

When they rose, she came to Étienne and said, "My brother and I have arranged, my child, to have the marriage ceremony quite soon. There are other plans for the rest of the day," she added somewhat mysteriously.

After a while the minister came and, with him, some of the leading Huguenot burghers, whom the Provost had invited to witness the marriage. Some of them had seen Étienne on that memorable day when he and Rossignol fought their way into Rouen, and all had heard the story of his strange experiences and of the Indian girl who had saved his life, and was now to be his bride.

So they stood up to be married, a rarely noble couple, all agreed, Canoga's dark beauty set off by a robe of cream-colored silk, Pierre Ramé's gift, her shining hair entwined with pearls of her native Chicora, and over her breast the miniature of Étienne's mother, which Madame Marcel had hung there, saying, "None could wear it more worthily. In her name, I greet you as her daughter."

Étienne wore dark velvet, and on his breast gleamed the six-pointed star of a Knight of Béarn, sent to him by his queen in recognition, her letter said, of the faithful services of the messenger whom she once sent to Rouen.

Rossignol, supporting him, was superb in plum-colored velvet, his bushy locks swept back from his noble brow, his eyes bright with joy, Frédégonde gleaming at his side.

"A sword seems a trifle superfluous at a wedding," he had said to Étienne, "but we must consider her feelings. Since the day that she swore friendship to you she has never failed you." So there she was, radiant, rejoicing in a brand-new baldric of embroidered silk which Madeleine had wrought.

Then, on the very spot where his parents had been married, Étienne and Canoga took the vows and were declared man and wife.

The congratulations over, Provost Marcel, addressing the company, said, "The Baron of Beaupré invites us all to be his guests at a marriage-supper to be given in his château."

The Baron of Beaupré! His château! What could this mean? Étienne hastened to the Provost. "It is impossible!" he expostulated. "I could not go there. It would be too painful. Besides, the present occupant is scarcely friendly to me."

"Pardon me," the Provost returned, smiling. You will see that you are mistaken. The former occupant is dead, and the new Baron of Beaupré is a fine fellow. All the world speaks well of him. There will be no gladder heart than his when you are under his roof."

Utterly mystified, Étienne turned to Madame Marcel. Her eyes were moist. "It is all as my brother has told you," she said. "Trust us, my child. We knew our ground when we accepted this invitation for you. Rest assured, you will have such a welcome at Beaupré as will warm your heart."

"Besides, we are all of us going with you, to keep you in countenance," said Marguerite, coming up to Étienne's side, laying her hand on his arm and look-

ing up into his face in a way that carried him back to that night on the Seine — how long ago!

"What does my wife say?" said Étienne, turning proudly to Canoga.

"It is kindly meant, and I think we should go," she answered in her low, musical voice. "It will show that you have not any resentment against the present owner."

"You have settled it, dear, in your own sweet way," he said. "We shall go."

Ample provision had been made for conveying the party to Beaupré. There were coaches for the women and horses for the men. When they came out on the street they found it thronged. All Rouen was astir and expectant. As the cavalcade advanced, eager spectators craned their necks to catch a sight of the Indian bride, and she acknowledged their demonstrations of friendly interest with smiles.

Out upon the highway to Yvetot they went and on through the golden autumn afternoon, till, when darkness was falling, an old château greeted them from afar with light streaming from its open door and from every window. As they neared it, there were signs of bustle. Torches hurried through the darkness and grouped themselves about the entrance, while a bell pealed merrily in the belfry of a neighboring church.

"Let us alight here," said Provost Marcel, when they had come in front of the château.

After forming the little procession, the bride and groom in front; next, Madame Marcel leaning on his arm; and the others by twos, he gave the word, "Forward!"

Meanwhile the tenants of the estate, torch in hand, had ranged themselves in a double line. As the bridal party passed between, the homely faces beamed with kindness, and there was a joyful murmur.

"He has his mother's eyes," said an old man.

"And his grandfather's high bearing," added another.

But Canoga was the chief object of admiration. "Ah, the beautiful lady!" was the common exclamation.

Up the steps the young couple led the way. In the doorway a white-haired seneschal, bowing low, handed Étienne a great iron key, then stepped aside. On they went the length of the hall, brilliant with lights. But where was the hospitable master? He was nowhere to be seen. They turned, in perplexity.

The Provost also turned and faced the company, behind whom the servants and tenants had grouped themselves.

"Friends," he said, "I have a communication of importance to make to you. Some time since the late Baron Guillaume de Beaupré died childless. Certain persons, knowing that an heir of the older line existed, resolved to make an effort in his behalf to procure the restitution of the title and estate. The conditions were favorable. Provincial parliaments had annulled many harsh forfeitures. In this case, the estate having passed from the right line by reason of a mere difference of religious belief, there seemed valid ground for bringing the cause before the proper tribunal for review.

"The friends of the rightful heir therefore presented a petition, in his name, to the Parliament of

Rouen, reciting the facts of the case and praying judgment in his favor. The Parliament examined witnesses, heard argument, and passed a decree which has received the royal approval. It determines who is henceforth lord of this estate."

He paused, drew forth a document, and opened it, while the company, with dancing eyes, watched Étienne, who stood behind him, pale, with parted lips.

Then he wheeled, and, bowing very low, said, "In the King's name, I pronounce you, Étienne Beaupré Cazenove, lord of this manor and Baron of Beaupré, and herewith I hand you your patent," passing over the open parchment with "*Carolus Rex*" scrawled at the bottom.

Then what a joyful clamor! Such hand-shakings, embraces, kisses, mostly on wet cheeks! After Étienne's came Canoga's turn. Then the company fell one upon another with mutual felicitations. Who had ever heard of so great a secret kept so long by so many people?

"To think of being my boy's guest in his mother's, his own house!" said Madame Marcel, dropping her head on his shoulder and weeping softly.

"Oh, but Uncle André hasn't told the tenth part of the story," said Marguerite, hanging on his other arm and looking up into his face with brimming eyes. "He hasn't told how Mama and he have labored and fought for you; how he traveled to Lourdes, to talk with your father and get a copy of your baptismal register; how he argued before the Parliament against a great lawyer from the University of Paris; how dear

little Mama summoned her courage and appeared as a witness; how he pleaded so eloquently —"

"Tut! Tut, child!" the Provost broke in. "That is one of your dear mother's fancies. Our only eloquence was the simple justice of our cause."

"As you will, Uncle. But, at all events, you won the decree. Then you did the hardest part of all, getting the King's approval. Tell Étienne how that was."

"I took the decree to Admiral Coligny," said the Provost simply, "and asked him to obtain the King's approval of it. All Huguenot affairs, you know, go through his hands. He read it over until he came to the name. Then he looked up, with that piercing glance of his, and said sharply, 'Cazenove — son of a pastor in the Pyrenees?'

"'The same,' I answered.

"'Was in Florida with Ribaut and Laudonnière?'

"'He was,' I replied.

"'The fellow is a poltroon,' and he thrust the paper back into my hand.

"I was dumbfounded. It was of no use to plead with him. He was inexorable. I came away with the unapproved decree in my pocket, and we were in despair.

"While we were still casting about, one day there came a letter from La Rochelle telling of Gourgues's and your triumph.

"The very thing we needed! I borrowed the letter and posted off to Paris. I no sooner appeared than the Admiral smiled.

"'You have come about that Cazenove matter,'

he said. 'I was misinformed about him. He is a gallant fellow. Gourgues praises him in the highest terms. Have you that decree with you?'

"I handed it to him. He read it over, smiling. The next morning he went off to the Louvre, while I waited, with an anxious heart.

"'There!' he said, when he came back, handing me the document and smiling grimly. 'If the King had known that your friend was Gourgues's lieutenant, the only paper he would have signed for him would have landed him in the Bastile. But he was in high good humor and in a hurry. This is one of his hunting days. Bugles were blowing, and he was eager as a schoolboy to be off. I had stuck the decree into a sheaf of papers. He snatched them from me and, while a valet fastened his hunting-boots, scribbled his name under each, without so much as a question.'"

"Master, supper is served," the seneschal presently announced, and threw open the door of the dining-hall.

There, under the portraits of his ancestors, crusaders, templars, and wardens of the marches, the light falling on shining silver and snowy linen, Étienne and the daughter of the Natchez entertained their friends. A joyful feast it was, bright with love and mirth.

Then they passed into the great saloon. As they sat in the ruddy glow of a fire crackling on the wide hearth, Canoga by Étienne's side, the light reflected in her dark eyes carried him back to evenings in the cabin at Charles Fort, and his heart was full.

He turned to Rossignol and said, "Roland, your muse surely has a word for this happy hour."

"It is indeed a happy hour," Rossignol replied, with a smile at once bright and inscrutable. "I have made some verses for it."

As he sang, tossing back his great mane, he seemed to throw off the weight of years, and his eyes to sparkle with the fire of youth, while a thrill of wonder ran through the circle of friends. Who was the goddess he celebrated? Was she present or absent? A being of flesh and blood, or a heaven-born creature that had brought cheer to his lonely heart?

The reader may judge. Here is the song — at least, the sense of it:

La Forêt de Longue Attente.

As once I fared upon my way,
I strayed aside, with fading day,
And chanced within a dusky wold
Of vaulted boughs, phantasmal, cold.
All drear the air. No bird sings there,
No flowers bloom, to light the gloom
Of la Forêt de Longue Attente.

A glamour did my spirit seize,
An age-long sleep my senses freeze.
My blood grew thin, my temples gray,
Uncounted years spellbound I lay.
A storm down swept, and still I slept,
A senseless wight, the moonless night
In la Forêt de Longue Attente.

I stirred, I woke! What magic power
Had loosed the spell of the baleful bower?
Chaste Dian's eyes fixed soft on mine
My being thrilled with life's red wine.
Her radiant beams in silver streams
Shed heavenly light o'er all the night
In la Forêt de Longue Attente.

Oh! sweeter far than garish day
The silver sheen of Dian's ray.
Henceforth, my Queen, be guide and friend,
Light all my way and crown its end.
With glad surprise, in your sweet eyes
I live anew and bid adieu
To la Forêt de Longue Attente.

THE END